

SIGHT AND SOUND

AUTUMN 1963 * 4' - / 85c





The Contemporary Cinema

Penelope Houston



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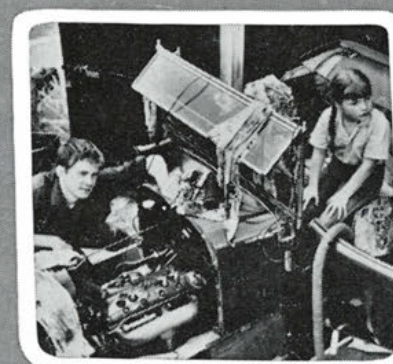
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CONTENTS

AUTUMN

1963

VOLUME 32 NO. 4

FEATURES

- 174** In the Picture
177 The Festivals: Venice and Trieste
180 Jean-Luc Godard's *Le Mépris*
190 Film Clips: ARKADIN
206 Correspondence
208 Current Film Guide

ARTICLES

- 159** The Figure in the Carpet:
PENELOPE HOUSTON
165 Letter from Hollywood:
COLIN YOUNG
168 Interview with Roger Leenhardt and
Jacques Rivette: LOUIS MARCORELLES
182 Flavour of Green Tea over Rice:
TOM MILNE
187 Moscow Roundabout: JOHN GILLET
199 Sorcerers or Apprentices: ROBERT VAS

ON THE COVER: Dirk Bogarde and James Fox in
Joseph Losey's *The Servant*.

FILM REVIEWS

- 193** 8½: ERIC RHODE
193 Billy Liar: PETER HARCOURT
194 Nazarin: GEOFFREY NOWELL-SMITH
195 Le Petit Soldat:
PETER JOHN DYER
196 Freud—the Secret Passion:
ELIZABETH SUSSEX
197 Eve: JOHN RUSSELL TAYLOR
197 The Four Days of Naples:
GEOFFREY NOWELL-SMITH
198 The Raven: PETER JOHN DYER
198 Cleopatra: PENELOPE HOUSTON

BOOK REVIEWS

- 204** Eisenstein Drawings:
MOURA BUDBERG
205 The Innocent Eye:
BRENDA DAVIES

SIGHT AND SOUND is an independent critical magazine sponsored and published by the British Film Institute. It is not an organ for the expression of official British Film Institute policy; signed articles represent the views of their authors, and not necessarily those of the Editorial Board.

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Penelope Houston

THE FIGURE IN THE CARPET

"... He gives me a pleasure so rare; the sense of ... something or other."

I wondered again: "The sense, pray, of what?"

"My dear man, that's just what I want you to say!"

—HENRY JAMES, *The Figure in the Carpet*.

THE SUMMER NUMBER of the Californian magazine *Film Quarterly* gives us three views of Hitchcock's *The Birds*. To Miss Pauline Kael it is "a bad picture on every level"; to the editor, Mr. Callenbach, it is "disappointing . . . made on two mistaken assumptions." But Mr. Andrew Sarris insists that it gives us "Hitchcock at the height of his artistic powers"; and when, to even up the sides, we look to Mr. Peter Bogdanovich, he assures us that if Hitchcock had never made another film, this one alone "would place him securely among the giants of the cinema." In the present confused state of film criticism, such basic disagreements should surprise no one; but the interesting point is that the split runs right down the line of a critical theory. And what one thinks not merely about *The Birds* but about Hitchcock, and not merely about Hitchcock but about large areas of film-making, is liable to be influenced by what one makes of the theory involved.

It started out in France, in the middle Fifties, as the *politique des auteurs* pursued by *Cahiers du Cinéma*. Lately, largely through the vigorous proselytising efforts of a single critic, Andrew Sarris, it has acquired naturalised American status under the rather repellent title of the *auteur* theory. Briefly, it divides film-makers into *auteurs* (true creators) and the rest. A director who does not qualify as an *auteur* may make a good film, or even a

series of good films, but this won't necessarily help him to cross the great divide: he will have had the luck of the right script, the right combination of actors, or some happy victory of circumstance over mediocrity. Once an *auteur*, on the other hand, more or less always an *auteur*. To determine who is in and who is out calls for a certain amount of systematisation, and *auteur* critics (Mr. Sarris, single-handed, in *Film Culture*; the *Movie* team here) enjoy charting their tastes, fitting each director into his appropriate slot in a complicated grid of talent. *Cahiers*, where the whole thing started, originated the notion of the pantheon, with its greater and lesser gods.

All this is only perhaps a systematisation of a practice common to every critic and, one would have thought, many filmgoers. The director's name is, or should be, the guarantee of some kind of personal style, some view of the world, some specific brand of pleasure. What *Cahiers du Cinéma* did, almost ten years ago, was to take over a whole new territory in the name of a principle. They broke down the old snobbish barrier between the 'art' cinema of creative effort and individuality (mostly European directors; a few American exceptions such as Chaplin, Welles, etc.) and the 'commercial' outsiders. Hitchcock, Hawks, Preminger, they argued, had as much claim to be regarded as individual creators, and as clear a line of continuity running through their work, as the acknowledged textbook directors. They chose to ignore a good deal of the actual practice of Hollywood: in particular, they showed a quite startling ignorance of the role of the producer. But the job they did was so valuable, and at



"What seems to be the trouble, captain?" Mildred Natwick and Edmund Gwenn in "The Trouble with Harry".

the time so necessary, that it marks a kind of watershed in critical attitudes.

The disagreements set in later, not with the insistence that some directors are creative and others not, which is hardly disputable, but with the labelling and measuring process. A critic who doesn't subscribe to the *auteur* theory is not likely to be *unaware* of a director's qualities: he knows what a Nicholas Ray or an Otto Preminger can do. But he is likely to find the exercise of talent more erratic, more dependent on chance and circumstance and the creative luck of the draw. He may be guilty of heresies of taste (like preferring *Laura* to *Advise and Consent*), because he doesn't necessarily see a director's line of development as consistent. However much he may enjoy *The Big Sleep*, he won't take the view that it overshadows *The Maltese Falcon* because Hawks has been hoisted to the pantheon and Huston banished. Nor will he allow that *The Big Sleep*, splendid though it is, demands discussion on entirely equal terms with, say, *La Terra Trema*.

* * *

This has taken us a long way from Hitchcock and *The Birds*. But it's not quite such a digression as it seems: Hitchcock is one film-maker on whom all *auteur* critics, most non-*auteur* critics (barbarous but convenient phrase) and almost all filmgoers are superficially in accord. General agreement that he is a master; and immense areas of disagreement as to just where his mastery lies, and in which films it is most persuasively demonstrated.

The battle effectively began in 1954, when the intimidating phrase "Hitchcocko-Hawksien" was in the French air, and *Cahiers du Cinéma* brought out a special number devoted to the Master, with articles by Chabrol ("Hitchcock devant le mal"), Truffaut and others. "Hitchcock's teaching," said

Chabrol, "belongs to the realm of Ethics: his moral conceptions are integrated into a metaphysic." Jean Domarchi wrote a long article on the "unknown masterpiece" *Under Capricorn*, finding it "in its way as ambitious and as original as, let's say, *Finnegans Wake*." "It's a remarkable film," he concluded, "which obliges us to evoke at the same time Rousseau and Balzac, Richardson and Edgar Allan Poe, and even sometimes Shakespeare." Banished completely was the conception of Hitchcock the entertainer, the man who made thrillers because he enjoyed the mechanics of suspense and the chase.

The little book on Hitchcock published by Eric Rohmer and Claude Chabrol in 1957 carried the arguments a stage further. They gave, admittedly, a warning to the uninitiated: "One must consider Hitchcock's work in exactly the same way as that of some esoteric painter or poet. If the key to the system is not always in the door, or if the very door itself is cunningly camouflaged, this is no reason for exclaiming that there is nothing inside." As an example of their method (not, I think, an unfair one), we could quote the passage on *Rear Window*. Its significance, they argue, "cannot be grasped without a positive reference to Christian dogma. And moreover three quotations from the Gospel, inserted in the text, invite us to look at it in this way. Jansenist and Augustinian . . . this fable denounces not only the *libido sciendi*, still easier to identify in that it is provoked here, as in Genesis, by a woman's curiosity, but what the Fathers of the Church called the *delectatio morosa*. On to the idea of physical solitude is grafted that of moral solitude, conceived as a punishment for this hypertrophy of desire." We have moved (or, rather, they have moved) so far from the conventional way of thinking about Hitchcock that when Jean Douchet comes to write about him (again in *Cahiers*) he has almost to apologise for reverting to the old theme of suspense. "One knows how little attention the Hitchcock enthusiasts pay to suspense: the admission that suspense is at the basis of his appeal will surprise them." But all remains well: "terror and fear" are only "the emanations of his religious thinking." The suspense itself is "*l'attente d'une âme prise entre deux forces occultes, l'Ombre et la Lumière*."

At the outset, the 1954 issue of *Cahiers* carried a dissenting note by André Bazin, who seemed to see himself as a sad Canute holding back the flood, and two distinctly disilluminating interviews, one conducted by Chabrol and Truffaut and one by Bazin himself. To Bazin, Hitchcock said that he wanted his films to achieve a particular blend of drama and comedy, and consequently found *The Lady Vanishes* one of his most satisfying movies. He also argued, persuasively enough, that there was a greater margin of freedom in the English studios, precisely because they lacked Hollywood's commercial intelligence. To quote Bazin, quoting Hitchcock: "In Hollywood films are made for women, and it's in line with their sentimental tastes that one constructs scenarios. In England films are made for men, and that's why they never make any money."

Although Hitchcock is one of the most professionally articulate of film-makers, and an expert in the difficult art of being interviewed, these early encounters with *Cahiers* hardly read like a meeting of true minds. Everyone, of course, was more naive then. "Of all your films," they said, "our favourites are *Under Capricorn* and *I Confess*." Answer: "I find them too serious." (In this special context, it is almost as though Bresson, interrogated on *Pickpocket*, confessed to finding it a little lacking in *joie de vivre*.) What is the deepest logic of your films, comes the question? Answer: "To put the audience through it." Hitchcock was willing to agree with his questioners that his American films outclassed the English ones—but they remained suspicious, since only a few weeks previously he had said more or less the opposite to a group of English reporters. Truffaut, in the 1954 issue, was constrained to work out a theory that Hitch was something of a liar.

One's overall impression, from these interviews, must be that *le métaphysique de Hitchcock* came to the Master himself as a complete surprise, if not an actual shock. And, almost a

decade later, the differences of interpretation remain. One of the *Movie* writers found traces of tragedy in *Psycho*. Hitchcock's own comment when interviewed recently by the magazine: "It was made with quite a sense of fun on my part . . . It's rather like taking the audience through the haunted house at the fairground. After all, it stands to reason that if one were seriously doing the *Psycho* story it would be a case history." There's another revealing exchange in this interview, when the *Movie* interrogators asked Hitchcock if he hadn't recently "got much less interested in the mystery thriller element, much more interested in broadening things out." The answer: "Well, I think it's natural tendency to be less superficial, *that's Truffaut's opinion—he's been examining all these films. And he feels that the American period is much stronger than the English period . . .*" (my italics).

The point of these quotations is not to show up either Hitchcock or his interviewers. Part of the critic's job is precisely to trace that continuing thread, Henry James' "figure in the carpet", of whose presence in his work the creative artist may remain unaware. Creation is, up to a point, an intuitive process, and the artist may have no very clear idea as to why he always chooses a certain answer to a technical problem (or, for that matter, a moral one) until the critic points it out to him. One argument developed by Chabrol and Rohmer certainly holds water: the celebrated theory of the "transference of guilt," whereby one character, acting in intended or accidental complicity with another, assumes his crimes or his criminal desires as his own. This is most evident in a work such as *Strangers on a Train*, where the whole plot premise hinges on a crime committed by one person on behalf of another, or in *I Confess*, where the murderer absolves himself by his act of confession and makes the priest an accomplice in his crime, or *The Wrong Man*, where the false accusation loads an intolerable burden of guilt not on the man accused but on his wife. But it can be traced, equally, through *Rear Window* (the argument that the crippled photographer, by willing something to happen, preferably criminal, as it were creates the crime he watches), or through *Vertigo* or even *Psycho*.

Here, again, the difference of opinion is less over what happens than over how and why it happens and how significant it is. The hazard of theory, and particularly of the Eureka sort of theory in which one discovery (Hitchcock is a Catholic; therefore . . .) explains all the rest, is the ease with which anything and everything can be assimilated to fit. Even the bicycle which one of the priests is always wheeling indoors in *I Confess*, and which at one moment topples over, is found disquieting by Chabrol, who asks us to consider *what makes it fall*. Nothing is more seductive to the critic than the temptation to find some grand design in an artist's work, particularly if no one has noticed it before. But critical discipline properly demands the most scrupulous examination of one's own theories, to test the point at which original thought shades into dreamy fantasy.

Also, in the cinema particularly, there is the persistent urge to fill the pantheon with true gods. If Hitchcock "only" makes thrillers, does he really deserve his place up there with Bresson and Buñuel and Mizoguchi? But if behind the thrillers we are seeing eternity in a blaze of light, then his place must be as sure as anyone's. To quote Chabrol (1954) again: "I and some of my colleagues have discovered in your work a carefully concealed theme, which is that of the search for God. What do you feel about this?" Hitchcock: "Search for good. Oh, yes. There is a search for good." Chabrol: "Not good. God himself!" Hitchcock: "God! A search for God! Maybe, but it is unconscious . . ."

* * *

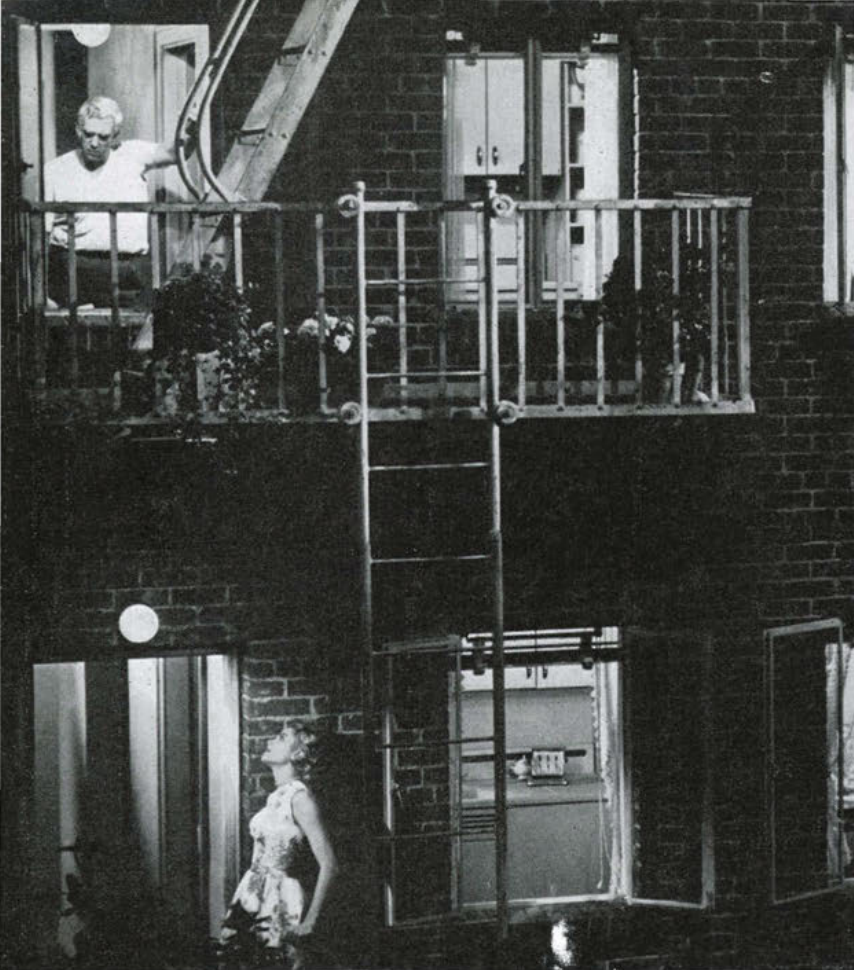
What interests Hitchcock? Not precisely character: he creates it, and his flair for casting sustains it, but it is character directed to the ends of a limited dramatic situation, star personality cut to size. Not, certainly, professional crime, the mechanics of a bank robbery or the operations of a spy ring.



"*Strangers on a Train*": Robert Walker demonstrates the art of strangling; Norma Varden submits, and Patricia Hitchcock observes.

Professionalism hints at routine, and Hitchcock's is the art of the unexpected—a celebration of that jarring moment when, walking in the dark down a staircase which you know every foot of the way, you suddenly hit bottom one step too soon. When Hitchcock talks of his own technique, it is often in terms of a deliberate avoidance of cliché. If a man is lured to an attempted assassination, tradition demands a dark street, footsteps in the night. So Hitchcock, in *North by Northwest*, chose the widest stretch of country at his disposal and filmed a classic sequence built on a series of incongruities. A bare prairie, in long shot, with a road running as straight as a ruler; the hero standing alone at the bus stop, out of place in his city clothes; a car jolting down a side track; a man getting out; a shot of their confrontation, facing each other across the road like two opponents in a Western gunfight; then a snatch of conversation, establishing that the stranger is only a stranger and hinting at the real source of danger; then solitude again, and the silence broken by the sudden attack of the crop-dusting plane, spraying the ground with machine-gun bullets.

The Trouble with Harry, a comedy so happily amoral that even enthusiasts for *le métaphysique de Hitchcock* can find in it hardly a thread of esoteric content, is entirely constructed on incongruities. Deliberately, Hitchcock juxtaposes his most exquisite setting, the red-gold autumn woods of Vermont, with his central object, the troublesomely dead Harry, carefully filmed so that it's his smart blue and red socks that dominate the scene. Half a dozen shots of blazing foliage precede the first moment of action, when a small boy with a toy gun stumbles upon Harry in his clearing. And from then on the corpse is viewed with urbane malice, as an obstacle to be fallen over, lugged around, buried and dug up again. Everyone in the film is much more interested in his own affairs than in Harry; so, come to that, is Hitchcock.



Keeping watch on a murderer: Grace Kelly and Raymond Burr in "Rear Window".

Here, too, we get one of those small, carefully planned spoofs on the audience which reveal the way his mind works. It is established that a cupboard door in Jennifer's (Shirley MacLaine's) house refuses to stay shut. When the sheriff arrives to question his suspects, who have Harry hidden on the premises, the young artist (John Forsythe) is discovered leaning against the door. Clearly something incriminating is hidden in the cupboard; clearly Forsythe is going to move away and the door will fly open. He does; it does—and there is nothing there. A Hitchcock joke, like the collapsing bicycle in *I Confess*, or the nun with the high-heeled shoes in *The Lady Vanishes*, or the tennis match shot in *Strangers on a Train*, with all the heads turning to follow the ball, and the one stationary figure in their midst.

These are images of Hitchcock's cinema: creations of a mind which enjoys above everything incongruity, surprise, the quirkish bypaths of human behaviour. Rich and capricious old women stub out their cigarettes in jars of cold cream (*Rebecca*) or congealing fried eggs (*To Catch a Thief*); a respectable lady, coming upon an equally respectable gentleman tugging a corpse along by its heels, finds nothing more to say than a civil, "What seems to be the trouble, captain?"; a spy, holding up a man at the point of a gun, is summoned by his wife to lunch. Being a Hitchcock wife (and Helen Haye at that), she doesn't bat an eyelid.

Hitchcock's humour is thoroughly English, derived from very reputable literary sources (the Stevenson of *The Dynamiter*, perhaps even Wilkie Collins) and already slightly old-fashioned. The joke makes its own point: try to treat it as a symbol, probe it for inner meaning, and its effortless humour falls apart in your hands. One of his most attractive and least valued English films, *Young and Innocent*, contains a scene in which a man on the run has to join in a children's birthday party. Anyone could get this far: the Hitchcock extra is the fugitive's bold effort to pass off some hideous piece of junk statuery, purloined from the garden, as his birthday offering. And this, precisely, is the sort of irrelevance which his English

films managed to accommodate, and which got lost in the more commercial logic of his early Hollywood movies.

Here comes the critical parting of the ways. The critics of *Cahiers du Cinéma*, and those who have followed them, see the English period as no more than a prelude to the greater glories of *Notorious*, *Under Capricorn* and *I Confess*. Where the most direct comparison can be made, between the 1934 and 1956 versions of *The Man Who Knew Too Much*, they have no doubts at all. To Chabrol and Rohmer, the 1956 film is "one of those in which the Hitchcock mythology finds its purest expression." Doris Day's scream at the Albert Hall, which deflects the assassin's aim, is a moment of exquisite splendour, expressing "the revolt of sensibility against the cold logic of *la machination*." Ian Cameron, writing in *Movie*, finds a less transcendental satisfaction. "The obsession with motherhood is the most conspicuous facet of Hitchcock's concern with the ideal of the family . . . In *The Man Who Knew Too Much* . . . he shows the importance he attaches to the family by centering his film on a family that has been broken up."

Yet, obstinately, one's preference for the original version survives. In 1934 Hitchcock filmed a fast-moving thriller: a man on holiday in Switzerland gets to hear that an assassination is being planned in London; his child is kidnapped to prevent him talking; along with a pleasant, bumbling relation (survival of the Watson tradition) he gets on the trail. Climax at the Albert Hall; second climax cribbed from the Sidney Street siege, with mother (Edna Best), who happens to be a crack shot, picking off the villain as he hauls her child over the roof tops. Along the way, we had such virtuosic incidents as the murder of the secret agent (Pierre Fresnay) during a dance, the bullet thudding through the window and the hands pointing at the hole in the glass; or that ravishing moment, in the chapel somewhere down in Limehouse, when the old pew-opening person tugs a revolver from her oilcloth shopping bag.

Hitchcock could afford to take some things for granted: not least that mothers whose children have been kidnapped will feel a certain natural distress. The short scene in which uncle and father play with the missing Betty's toy train would strike some chord in his English, middle-class audience. By 1956, the first location has moved from Switzerland to Morocco, and it is a good forty minutes before we come to the kidnapping. The time is not ill-spent; but neither, to my mind, is it very well-spent. (Mr. Cameron argues that we get to see how likeable the characters are, and consequently to feel for them. Awkward, though, if one still finds Edna Best and Leslie Banks more likeable.) I can't but feel that this long introduction is precisely what one might have expected at that moment in Hollywood history, when the pressure was on to exploit both stars and locations. And when we do get to London, the new settings (taxidermist's works; back street chapel; Iron Curtain embassy) can't compare with the old. The Albert Hall sequence perhaps benefits from both the time and the technical resources Hitchcock could bring to it; but it seems a strategic blunder to follow it immediately with an anti-climactic suspense sequence organised on the same principle of waiting for something to happen. As a thriller, the new film really isn't a patch on the old one. But can't we see, we may be asked, that it's so much more than a thriller . . . ?

* * *

Hitchcock's films during the last twelve years or so, the period since *Strangers on a Train*, can be divided into the thrillers and the rest, films more or less ambitious. *The Trouble with Harry*, that conversation piece and divertissement, stands apart. One needn't linger over *Dial M for Murder*, a precision adaptation of a clockwork murder plot, or *To Catch a Thief*, with its car chases along the Corniche, picnic lunches and smart, sun-tanned crime. And *The Man Who Knew Too Much* belongs to my mind along with the thrillers, despite both the theological and the domestic arguments. *North by Northwest* rounds them all up, being a film largely composed of enjoyable reminiscences: the repeated echoes of *The Thirty-Nine Steps*;

the trick of virtually opening a film with a car chase (*To Catch a Thief*); the heroine's ambiguous situation (*Notorious*). It is done with the utmost bravura, confidence and good humour, and looks like a movie scripted to order around its locations. Scenes for fanciers of Hitchcock humour: the hotel-breaking episode, with the hero's mother as reluctant accomplice; the confusion of railway porters at the Chicago station; and Cary Grant's wild effort to get himself arrested at the auction, which again depends on a disturbance of the civilised equilibrium. Jean Douchet has a theory that the hero, as an advertising man, has to sell products, and that in assuming the identity of Kaplan, the non-existent secret service agent, "he becomes the product himself." *C'est magnifique; mais ce n'est pas la critique!*

These are the "mere" thrillers, the films in which Hitchcock is relaxed and the audience pleasurably excited and entertained, neither involved in emotional complexities nor brought to the edge of their seats with apprehension. *Strangers on a Train*, which marks the first stage in his long association with the cameraman Robert Burks, and the only script collaboration in his entire career with a top-flight thriller writer, Raymond Chandler, is something different. The film has a brilliant, menacing glitter, a diamond hardness; and it contains at least two classic anthology pieces, in the sequence of cross-cutting between the tennis match and the murderer's efforts to recover the lost cigarette lighter, and the entire episode of the murder on the fun-fair island. One critical point, however, may be worth making. Certainly the film entirely supports the "transference of guilt" theory, and also the other familiar argument that Hitchcock, through his masterful involvement of the audience, forces them into a kind of complicity of criminal desire, a state of willing seduction by the villain. It hasn't, however, perhaps been quite enough emphasised that on both points, for once, Hitchcock was forestalled. Perhaps censorship, or the need for a hero, encouraged him to preserve Farley Granger's innocence; but read Patricia Highsmith's original for the really serpentine involvement of one mind with another.

This was neither the first nor the last of his studies in obsession: the works in which, far from putting a man on the run, he sets up the chase within his own mind. The four most critically controversial films of the Fifties—*I Confess*, *The Wrong Man*, *Rear Window* and *Vertigo*—all share something of this quality; as indeed, in its own way, does *Psycho*. The



After the battle: Tippi Hedren and Rod Taylor in "The Birds". (This shot, incidentally, does not appear in the finished film.)

first two remind us (though *Cahiers* of course needed no reminding) of Hitchcock's Catholic upbringing. *I Confess* tells the story of a priest prevented by the secrecy of the confessional from revealing a murderer's identity, and hounded by guilt feelings about a crime from which he benefits, and for which he finally stands trial. In spite of a masterly use of Quebec's weighty architecture, I find the film dull going, not only for the reasons given by Hitchcock himself—too serious, and wrongly cast—but because of a certain old-fashioned mustiness about the approach, like *The Ware Case* with religious trimmings. The priest (Montgomery Clift) remains a cipher, masochist rather than saint, a man pursued not by the hounds of heaven but by Karl Malden and the city police.

The Wrong Man takes virtually the same attitude to its central character (Henry Fonda), the Stork Club musician falsely suspected of leading a double life as a hold-up man. Here, however, Hitchcock in one sequence puts the man's stunned passivity to superb use. The scene of Balestrero's imprisonment, filmed with a documentary precision which still allows us a wholly subjective viewpoint, conveys so direct a sense of shame, shock, and acute physical withdrawal from the details of handcuffs and fingerprinting, that we hardly need to be reminded of the supposedly traumatic incident when the infant Alfred found himself locked in a police cell. Another sequence, in the insurance office, demonstrates that total control which allows Hitchcock to move from objective to subjective with hardly a shift of gears. We know, on all the evidence of the film to date, that Balestrero is a man of untarnished virtue; yet when we see him momentarily through the eyes of the girl behind the counter, hand slowly moving to jacket pocket, we can almost believe it will come out holding a gun. One supposes that Hitchcock made *The Wrong Man* for its opening. Tied to the events of a true story, he had to follow it through to its conclusion in the wife's madness—a change of emphasis which, as subsequent interviews have confirmed, obviously bothered him. Hitchcock deals often enough in abnormal states of mind, but I have a feeling that he doesn't much care for psychiatrists, or the more technical aspects of insanity. One feels that he's impatient to get the wife (Vera Miles) back on her feet again.

Obsession takes charge in *Rear Window* and *Vertigo*, forerunners of *Psycho* in their use of the camera to break down critical resistance, and the two films which most welcome a *Cahiers*-style interpretation. *Rear Window* is, of course, the voyeur's testament: Hitchcock's justification of his own curiosity—and, by extension, ours. By setting himself a



Peter Lorre and Cicely Oates, the kidnappers in the original "Man Who Knew Too Much".

precise and exacting technical problem, that of confining the camera's vision to what the crippled news photographer can see from his window, Hitchcock forces the audience to peer with him across the courtyard. The observation is heartless, the antics of most of the neighbours grotesque or boring. Within the room (with Thelma Ritter as the nurse and Grace Kelly as the perennial Hitchcock girl, blonde, rich and voguish) the talk is shiny magazine dialogue. But the audience, watching James Stewart watching a murderer, become inextricably caught up in his obsessive curiosity. The secret (so much of the Hitchcock secret) is the angle of vision: this time the passive hero really is powerless to intervene, which puts him in exactly the position of the man in the stalls.

If *Rear Window* involves, *Vertigo* hypnotises, although I must admit it was a hypnotism I resisted until reseeing the film recently. Perhaps one was put off at first by the Boileau-Narcejac plot, of the order described by Maurice Richardson as madman's flytrap, and depending on at least three wild improbabilities. But as the detective (James Stewart) follows the remote, pale girl he has been hired to watch; as he drives behind her down the San Francisco streets, with the car ahead always just slowly disappearing round another corner; as he makes his way through the churchyard, the museum, the decayed old boarding-house, one is drawn again into the obsessive occupation of spying on a spy. The first half of *Vertigo* moves like a slow, underwater dream. The second half, with the elaborate effort to transform the second Kim Novak back into the first Kim Novak, has the hallucinatory quality of nightmare. By the end of the film, the audience ought to be as mad as James Stewart appears to be.

Psycho carries the process a stage further. In the opening shot the camera is peering, a little furtively, beneath the half-drawn blind of a window; and throughout the film Hitchcock is able to play not merely on the audience's nerves (easy) but on their curiosity. He is, as he says, "using pure cinema to make the audience emote"—directing each reaction of the spectators as surely as he directs the film itself. If people are angered by *Psycho*, as were so many critics in this country, it may be because they resist this direction: they don't like the feeling that Hitchcock has them so precisely where he wants them. Or they may resist the insolent confidence of his humour. One thinks of the scene in which Norman Bates stands by a stunted tree, looking all too like one of his own stuffed birds, and watches the car make its faltering descent into the swamp. Here one might be in the presence of one of Hitchcock's better definitions: "for me, the cinema is not a slice of life, but a slice of cake."

* * *

What *does*, then, interest this bland, smooth man? The quirkish, English Hitchcock and the American Hitchcock who deals in the twists and turns of the mind are not perhaps as far apart as they seem. Humour at one end, monomania at the other, are alike in disturbing equilibrium and order. Hitchcock is fascinated, one deduces, by the way unreason keeps breaking in, by the ease with which system can be overturned. But it's the dark of the mind rather than of the soul that concerns him: his own position is that of the rational man for whom the world is a place of sublime and alluring unreason. A smashed cup, however, gives him more to work with than a smashed city; and a weakness of *The Birds*, his latest film, is that it seems to be reaching out, however half-heartedly, towards some kind of larger significance.

The opening scene is classic Hitchcock: spoiled rich girl (Tippi Hedren; a few years ago it might have been Grace Kelly) encounters cool, business-like young man (Rod Taylor) in a San Francisco pet shop. (Why, incidentally, has no expert in Hitchcock-exegesis yet produced a thesis on the fruitful theme of his fondness for shops?) The flustered proprietress looks on; a bird gets out of its cage; some sparring dialogue

begins to establish character. By the time the girl, Melanie, is pursuing her young lawyer out to his home in Bodega Bay, with the two love-birds swaying with her car as it takes the corners, we are caught up in the old involvement.

There's a first jabbing intimation of violence, when a seagull zooms out of a clear sky to bang Melanie on the head. After this, tantalisingly, Hitchcock returns to his tactic of the slow build-up, keeping the birds waiting in the wings while he explores the family situation of the lawyer, his possessive mother (Jessica Tandy), all cool efficiency on the outside and a bundle of nerves within, and his former girl friend (Suzanne Pleshette). The situation of two girls in love with the same young man, and the mother who doesn't want him to marry anyone, is only involving up to a point—correctly so, because if we really became interested the bird invasion would simply come as a tiresome interruption to another story.

The birds attack at a children's party; they fly down the chimney; they murder a neighbouring farmer (Hitchcock gets any amount of threat into a quiet shot of a row of shattered cups on a dresser); they form up in black, sinister and orderly rows in the school playground, while the children sing away inside; they trap Melanie in a dive-bomber raid on a glass-walled telephone box; and finally they hold the lawyer and his family prisoner in their boarded up house. As all this goes on, two things become evident. Firstly that the crows and gulls, however well trained, must have been the very devil of a nuisance. The slow preparations for the onslaughts (the wait in the shuttered house; the playground scene) generally prove much more effective than the attacks themselves, which have to be devised in quick flurries of action, with most of the menace coming from the electronic sound track, to cover the fact that the birds are not really doing their stuff. Any amount of trick work went on, including a final shot composed of 32 separate pieces of film; and the trouble is that the film looks like it.

Secondly, the bird-people relationship remains precarious and tenuous. Admirers have made resolute efforts to forge links by pointing out that the mother weakens under fire while the girl stands up to it, and someone has even claimed that Annie, the school-teacher, gets pecked to death because she hasn't been properly attuned to life. (This seems a bit hard on Annie, but no matter.) I would strongly suspect that Hitchcock, a realist in most things, has got precisely the measure of his problem. In two sequences, in the town's café, he offers us 'explanations' from an eccentric ornithologist, a drunken prophet of doom, and a distraught woman who blames it all on Melanie. Here are clues for the theorists; here also is a shrewd director tossing a few ideas around to make it apparent that *he* doesn't know what the birds are up to any more than we do.

A little obscurity, however, does wonders for a contemporary film. If *The Birds* is really intended as a doomsday fantasy, one can only say that it's a lamentably inadequate one. But why not try the birds as the Bomb; or as creatures from the subconscious; or start from the other end, with Tippi Hedren as a witch? One could work up a pretty theory on any of these lines, if only one could suppress a conviction that Hitchcock's intention was an altogether simpler one. He scared us in *Psycho*, enough to make us think twice about stopping at any building looking remotely like the Bates motel. He tries it again in *The Birds*, but we will happily go on throwing bread to the seagulls, because the film can't for long enough at a time break through our barrier of disbelief. And a director who has told us so often that his interest lies in the way of doing things, not in the moral of a story, invites us to take him at his own valuation. One stumbling block finally stands in the way of abstractions, metaphysical or otherwise: Hitchcock's own intense concern for the concrete, and a sneaking suspicion that the best critic of Hitchcock is Hitch himself.



LETTER FROM HOLLYWOOD

COLIN YOUNG

DURING A TRIP TO EUROPE last year, some of the recent ferment in the cinema was summed up for me in a few words by Jean Cayrol, author of Resnais' *Muriel*, when he said that he and some of his colleagues were in revolt against the films of "papa". A simple phrase, one everyone in Europe had heard over and over again, but not at all echoed in Hollywood. In Hollywood no one knows there is a revolution, so of course there are no plans for manning the barricades.

If there is a new language in the cinema (Godard, etc.) it is certainly not being spoken in Hollywood, and when someone comes along using it, he is not understood. The revelation of the year has been Frank and Eleanor Perry's *David and Lisa*, a thoroughly conventional melodrama which all (except the highbrow critics) are treating very deferentially and (most important) are flocking to see. It is the *Marty* of our time and, as in the case of its predecessor, its accomplishments are more apparent than real. When we praised the verisimilitude of *Marty* it should have been a sign to us of how far away from reality Hollywood film-makers had moved, instead of exaggerating as we did the importance of Chayefsky's achievement in using his peculiar brand of tape-recorder dialogue.

In a recent issue of the *Journal* of the Screen Producers Guild, the suggestion is made (by an independent exhibitor) that *David and Lisa* is also the Mona Lisa of our time, that it possesses the right qualities of "simplicity", "sensitivity" and "appeal" (all left undefined). This is an argument in favour of

low-budget American movies aimed at the art house audience and "dealing with our times and tugging at our emotions," in competition with the foreign entries. I would like to know more about what he thinks would be saleable in such a programme. *David and Lisa* seems to get by through being determinedly simple and touching, without having anything to say about its characters more penetrating than the *Saturday Evening Post* level of short-story writing. But even a comparatively conventional first movie like Vilgot Sjöman's *The Mistress* seems vastly more relevant to the American movie-going public.

Part of the problem in Hollywood is a vast ignorance of what is happening in other countries. Some of this ignorance is wilful—as for example those who make movies themselves (or teach others how to) but rarely go to the cinema. This may not be a sin (Bresson stays at home), but it is a partial explanation for the resolutely old-fashioned ways of American movies and, by inversion, for the radical formlessness of the films made by those who do rebel, like the New American Cinema group. But there is also a strong individualistic streak in American film-makers, which makes them shy away from studying the innovations of others (or even exposing themselves to these innovations) on the grounds that the critical

Above: Mickey Rooney and Buddy Hackett in the Stanley Kramer comedy "It's a Mad, Mad, Mad, Mad World".

and the creative attitudes do not mix. The result of this is that they do imitate, but they imitate the past instead of the present.

Ray's *Pather Panchali* would have been deserted by its audience at the Screen Directors Guild some years ago if Ray had not been there; and some of the men who made Hollywood the film capital of the world in the Twenties and Thirties stood muttering angrily in the foyer after the show that it was the work of an amateur—someone who threw images on the screen and left the audience to work it out; someone who never told the audience what any of the characters wanted, or whether they ever got it. More recently, the Academy's special selection committee for films competing in the foreign-language category turned down entries from France and Italy—which happened to be *Marienbad* and *La Notte*. It is not simply a question of thinking these films were bad, but of not really recognising them as films at all.

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The industry wants to solve its problems (a diminishing market being chased by a decreasing number of films), but there are grounds for thinking that they cannot do so, since they still do not understand the problem they are facing. Magazines such as *Film Quarterly*, *Film Culture*, the *New York Film Bulletin*, critics like Dwight Macdonald (*Esquire*) or Stanley Kauffmann (*New Republic*), rarely affect or are even noticed by the great figures of the movies, the Hollywood studios, the New York banks and the Theater Owners of America, who are howling respectively for audiences, safe investment return and "product", but not knowing which way to look, or how to understand what they see.

The studios announce grandiose plans, but the same old things are behind the window-dressing. Zanuck takes over Fox from Spyros Skouras, hands over the studio operation to his son, announces a new programme of films, and kicks off with a Henry Koster production starring Sandra Dee. Universal-International announces a plan to look for new production talent, but those who venture too close are told that the studio is looking for people to put together packages. People with a script, stars, director, budget; everything except the money, which U-I will then arrange in exchange for distribution rights (and 40 per cent off the top), and with studio facilities

"made available". In other words, they run no more risk than United Artists, and throw in their studio facilities as part of the deal.

There is no sign that the much-touted plan for the co-operative, three-company venture in building one new studio complex on the Fox ranch at Malibu is anything but a real-estate move. In getting rid of their present studios and the valuable land they stand on, and designing new facilities which are more flexible and will be more frequently used, because fewer in number, the studios would merely be tightening their belts over a three-quarters empty stomach. There is no hint yet that they might be considering the formation of a giant common corporation, which would be big enough and strong enough to take risks with the kind of diversified programme recommended so optimistically by Richard Dyer MacCann in his book *Hollywood in Transition*. A more likely effect of the announcement will be a sudden rush of speculators buying up the residential land around the Fox ranch. There is always an angle, and rarely does it have much to do with the movies.

The fallacy of the Universal-International approach is that it is trying to blood the industry, or more narrowly its own flock, while proceeding in an entirely conventional manner. I do not mean by this that they are offering production support only to established directors or producers using established stars. But they still seem to be making the basic assumption that the project will first of all exist as a conventional script, which can then be packaged: cast, costumed (at least on paper), "broken down" and budgeted. There is a story about an American actor working with Rossellini, and telephoning his psychiatrist in the United States every night for solace, because he was not accustomed to working with a director who did not give him, days in advance, solid and well-rounded lines to study and memorise. The way of Godard, of Rossellini, of Cassavetes, is impossible in Hollywood. The director's cinema remains virtually unknown and unwanted, except by the newcomers whom U-I and the other studios are turning down. Even a courageous producer like Stanley Kramer will have more success in farming out low-budget pictures like *Pressure Point* (to Hubert Cornfield) than like *A Child is Waiting* (which he gave to John Cassavetes), because in the long run, men like Cassavetes and Kramer will not understand each other. Hitchcock, for all his finesse and talent, has spoiled Hollywood, because he has shown how it is possible to write everything down in advance—sketched, plotted, designed, cast, located, costumed, and therefore budgeted. This is what Hollywood really understands: everything else is irresponsible, and impossible.

* * *

We might expect that a country as large as the United States would eventually twist itself out of this barren situation and throw up a solution—one which would permit sufficient continuity with the Hollywood tradition to make use of its existing reservoir of craftsmanship and technical ability, but independent enough to permit some of the rich regional flavours of America to come into its films. The signs are that this will not happen. On the one hand, the studios will continue to expect projects to be conventional enough at the planning stage to be safely evaluated for commercial potential. At the same time, they will expect them to be magically transformed during production into a "new wave", simply because the budgets are low and the faces are new. On the other hand, if the question is "Can the United States develop regional film centres?", the answer (with the exception of New York) appears to be, depressingly, no—or at least not yet. All attempts so far to set up independent productions outside New York on the same basis of subscriptions and limited partnership used for *David and Lisa*, *The Connection*, *The Cool World*, have failed, whether the attempt has been made in Hollywood,



Janet Margolin and Keir Dullea in "David and Lisa".

San Francisco, Seattle, or elsewhere. Part of this is due to stricter partnership laws in the West (victims of land frauds for a hundred years), but part of it also stems from a conservatism in investment not peculiar to the American provinces.

One trouble is that *all* of the United States, at present, is provincial. New York, Washington D.C., Los Angeles, Chicago and San Francisco are all provincial with respect to each other. This is an American phenomenon, difficult to understand from Europe, which is accustomed to the centralisation of art and politics in the nations' capitals. America, effectively, has no capital; and the effects of artistic change, felt immediately and intensely in Europe, are softened and blunted in America by the single fact of dispersion. We used to say that Hollywood was not helped by being 3,000 miles away from the theatre centre in Broadway—but this was in the days when the New York stage was healthy. Now, with regionalism in the American theatre and with the establishment of strong repertory theatres—for instance in Minneapolis (Tyrone Guthrie), in San Francisco (Herb Blau) and Seattle (Stuart Vaughn)—there is always the possibility that some of this will get through to the movies.

The independent exhibitor quoted at the beginning of this letter is at least on the right lines when he asks for low budget American films made on American subjects, since an increasing number of Americans appear to be staying away from American movies (but seeing British and French and Italian ones) because they can no longer accept the unreality of the Hollywood film. "The trouble with Hollywood is its distance from reality; from the people Americans know and can identify with." These were the words not of a film critic but of a Seattle boiler-maker encountered in a national forest in the south of Washington State. It was part of a long tirade that poured out when he heard where I was from. Later, during a visit to Seattle, I found the same feeling in an audience which had discovered it might not always care very much for the alternatives provided by the New American Cinema group, and wondered if this meant it was wrong to hope that from somewhere America would get back into American films.

For people like this, and there must be many of them, *Hud* will be an exception, for at least it sets out to examine a part of American life and society that is usually mythified by Hollywood. But again the film-makers may have misjudged their audience. Hud's gesture of defiance at the end, as he slams through the screen door in search of a beer—the Texan version of the 'V' sign—is more sympathetic to a large part of the audience than Ritt or his scriptwriters probably bargained for. Ralph Nelson's *Lilies of the Field*, on the other hand, with its cute little story of an itinerant Negro handyman (Sidney Poitier) who is bamboozled by a group of refugee nuns into building them a chapel in the desert, is going to offend as many Americans as it charms. It is simply too gooey and sweet, too much the Hollywood version of what film-makers imagine audiences want. Thus everybody in *Lilies* is lovable (even characters whom, by all rights, we should dislike); and Poitier, charming though he is, has an impossible job carrying the film. And yet the United Artists press release on this movie describes it as violating the "play it safe" principles of domestic film-making, following none of the "safe" formulas of casting, production or story values. It is hard to believe that they believe it. But they do, and soon it will be listed along with *Marty* and *David and Lisa* as an example of what Hollywood can do when it really tries.

The only alternatives are the blockbusters like *Cleopatra* and *It's a Mad, Mad, Mad, Mad World*. No one has emerged well from the *Cleopatra* story. Undoubtedly the worst off, after the audience, is Walter Wanger, who leaves the impression in his astonishing self-portrait, *My Life with Cleopatra*, that he had no real creative function on the film and was allowed to contribute little towards its administration—even though it



Sidney Poitier in "*Lilies of the Field*".

was a project of his own company. Wanger's book has had a suit laid against it by Skouras, but Wanger himself is its principal victim. Coily dedicating it to his daughters, "who once asked what a producer does," he then proceeds to take away whatever respect we had left for the old-fashioned studio system. Nick Cominos (*Once Upon a Sunday*), who worked for a while on the production as assistant to Ray Kellogg, the special effects man, has made a one-reel satire on the epic called *Première*, using material shot at the opening night in Hollywood.

Fellini, in New York recently for the opening of *Eight and a Half* (which is going to make Hollywood green with envy), was asked if he had any plans for working there. He replied that he had made many mistakes in his life and probably would make some more—but that wasn't one of them. But some people are no longer there who might like to be. Skouras is not the only famous casualty. Joseph Vogel, saddled with the responsibility for the comparative failure of *Mutiny on the Bounty*, was eased out of the top studio position at Metro and then from the Board of Directors. The day after he left the studio someone called in for him, and the switchboard girl replied, "Mr. Vogel is no longer associated with Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer. . . . No—I can't tell you where you might reach him." These girls, like their colleagues at the Thalberg reception desk, always so severe with the casual caller, are just as merciless with the great when they have fallen.

It is all very sad, and Stanley Kramer's laugh-a-minute, 3-hour 40-minute *Mad, Mad, Mad, Mad World* probably will not make us feel much better. Nor does it help much to remember how things used to be—although the Wolper production (for television) of *The Fabulous Era*, made up of clips from films of the Thirties and candid shots of the stars and directors, does at least make us nostalgic for Busby Berkeley. Once the Hollywood Museum is established and is showing these films every day of the year, some of it may rub off, but meanwhile the traditions are being maintained only for lack of anything to take their place. And the gloss has long since gone. Not only Marilyn is dead.



ROGER

INTERVIEW: LEENHARDT WITH JACQUES RIVETTE



BY

LOUIS MARCORELLES

DURING THE CURRENT YEAR the French cinema has been going through a crisis. Economically life has been difficult, with few of the opportunities for young directors that existed only three or four years ago; in terms of ideas, critics are concerned to revalue the achievements of the New Wave. Roger Leenhardt and Jacques Rivette are both critics and film-makers, men of different generations (Leenhardt is 60, Rivette 35), who represent respectively the pre-war critical tradition, founded on literature, and the post-war innovations of *Cahiers du Cinéma*. The gap, however, is not all that considerable. *Cahiers*, in its special issue of last December, described Leenhardt as "the spiritual father of the New Wave" and the critic who formulated the principles of the new cinema.

Born in Montpellier, Leenhardt has been both critic and film-maker since the early Thirties. He has written for *Esprit*, *Lettres Françaises*, *L'Ecran Français*,

Cahiers du Cinéma. "Once every ten years," to quote *Cahiers* again, "a dazzling article reminds us that he was the first of the film critics." He has made upwards of thirty short films, the earliest of them dating from 1934, but only two features: *Les Dernières Vacances* (1947), a nostalgic study of the end of childhood, and *Le Rendezvous de Minuit* (1961), with Lilli Palmer in a dual role. He is at present making a film for television.

Jacques Rivette comes from Rouen, and was one of the team of young critics writing for *Cahiers* ten years or so ago, Bazin's "young Turks" of the French cinema. As a critic he has written for various magazines, including *Arts*; as a junior assistant director he worked with both Renoir and Becker. He made three shorts on 16mm. before directing the short story film *Le Coup du Berger* (1956). *Paris Nous Appartient*, winner of last year's B.F.I. award, the Sutherland Trophy, occupied him between 1958-60. Earlier this

year he directed Anna Karina on the stage, in the play *La Religieuse*.

The following interview, which was tape-recorded, has been transcribed by Michel Delahaye.

Hollywood and France

MARCORELLES: M. Leenhardt, how did you start out as a critic in the Thirties, and why did you become known as such a champion of the American cinema?

LEENHARDT: It wasn't through criticism that I came to the cinema, but the other way round. In the early Thirties—in 1933, to be exact—I was training as an editor, and used to work on the *Eclair* newsreels. At the same time I was also involved in a whole movement of ideas which had grown up round the magazine *Esprit*, but which spread much wider, and represented an attempt by French intellectuals to come to political, metaphysical and aesthetic grips with their consciences. Since I was a film technician, I found myself writing about the cinema; and I tried to base my criticism on an overall moral and intellectual view of life at the time, in line with *Esprit's* philosophy.

As for the American cinema, I must bring up something which probably seems ridiculously old-fashioned today: the sound film. After a long period of evolution, the cinema had grown into an art, a plastic art, which many people thought had reached perfection. Then, around 1929–30, came the whole sound revolution, which really split the European cinema. The best critics and film-makers all felt that sound was a total disaster, that it would mean the end of the cinema as an art and the beginning of a canned theatre which might satisfy popular audiences but would effectively stifle any creative effort. But in America, thanks to that famous Anglo-Saxon pragmatism, there never was any real problem. Look at their thrillers, for example, or the Westerns: there's no break in continuity between the later silent and the early sound films. It was American film-making which showed us how to overcome the apparent incompatibility between sound and image and so started us off on the road towards the modern cinema.

MARCORELLES: M. Rivette, you began as a critic some fifteen years later, after the war. Why were you so strongly pro-American?

RIVETTE: In 1950 we approached it from a rather different angle, but in the end the results were much the same. At that time, in Europe at least, the American cinema was not so much under-estimated as actually despised. It was a kind of critical duty to attack it, and everyone ran down Hollywood commercialism, Hollywood banality, Hollywood imbecility. It seemed to us—to Truffaut, Godard, myself—that this American cinema was in fact a good deal more intelligent, and even more intellectual, than the European cinema which was always being held up as an example to it. We felt that all kinds of directors, not only the recognised 'Hollywood intellectuals' like Mankiewicz, but the so-called commercial movie-makers like Hawks and Hitchcock, were producing films much more intelligent than those made in Europe by our Autant-Laras, Delannoys and De Sicas. It may have been a subtler kind of intelligence, because it expressed itself through style and behaviour rather than through all the usual outward signs.

LEENHARDT: It's remarkable that this anti-Hollywood feeling in France has been so strong and so persistent. Back in 1933, there were very few of us who had a good word for Hollywood. And even ten years or so ago, when *Cahiers du Cinéma* asked twenty French directors for their opinions on the American cinema, the almost unanimous answer was that it was rubbish. I think that only three people—Renoir, Astruc and myself—insisted that it was all-important.

MARCORELLES: Neither of you has mentioned the idea of *mise en scène*, although Rivette has cited a few 'auteurs'. Was this something you were really conscious of in the Thirties, or did

you tend much more to group films under general headings—gangster movies, crazy comedies, and so on—without bothering too much about the director's personal contribution?

LEENHARDT: Obviously, the conception of the 'auteur' was less precise in 1935 than in 1950. In general we saw Hollywood films as belonging to a genre—Westerns, comedies, and so on. But this very fact, I think, made the better critics aware of the need for creative individuality.

The difficulty arises when you talk of '*mise en scène*'. I remember writing an article just after the war which I titled 'Down with Ford, long live Wyler!' A lot of people were surprised then at the critical approach, which was an attempt to contrast two different conceptions of *mise en scène*. So I think I can claim to have been aware of the problem from quite an early stage. All the same, there is one point which ought never to be forgotten, and that is the importance of the script.

You must remember that after the coming of sound the scriptwriters took over a major role, which in some respects determined the evolution of the cinema. *It Happened One Night* was a key film for us, and you can't imagine now what a bombshell it seemed at the time. Out of nothing a genre had suddenly been created, and we had something new and wonderful, something the cinema had found for itself: the American comedy. But we also wondered just who was responsible for the miracle. Was it Capra, the director, or Robert Riskin, the scriptwriter? Some years later I saw another Riskin film, which he had directed himself, and I realised that he wasn't a creator: all the elements of his mythology were there again in the film, but the essential thing, the creative spark, was missing.

I believe, therefore, that individuality in the American cinema springs from this delicate balance which links script to *mise en scène*, *mise en scène* to script, and the current which runs constantly from one to the other. There's a creative tension here which is probably the essence of cinema, and seems bound to be a determining factor in its future development.

Something One Sees on the Screen

MARCORELLES: I suppose it was as a reaction against the critics' tendency to talk exclusively in terms of themes and subjects that people pounced so wildly on the whole idea of *mise en scène*.

RIVETTE: That's just it: a reaction. If we made such a point of *mise en scène* ten years ago, this was done deliberately to stimulate controversy and to rehabilitate the idea that cinema is also something which one *sees* on the screen. But over the last few years the conception has been so widely abused that one is finally driven to explain exactly what one meant. It is not simply a matter of talking about the fascination of the image one sees on the screen, but of understanding how *mise en scène* is an expression of the intelligence of the director. The term covers, that is to say, not only the position of the camera, but the construction of the script, the dialogue, and the handling of the actors. *Mise en scène*, in fact, is simply a way of expressing what in the other arts would be called the artist's vision; and a novelist's vision obviously does not depend solely on where he places an adjective, or how he builds a sentence, but also on the story he is telling. When we made claims for Preminger, or Hawks, or Hitchcock, it should have been evident that it was their personal vision of the world we wanted to bring home to audiences.

But the whole conception has been abused to the point of imbecility, and it is now used to suggest that so long as the camera movement can be called sublime, it makes no difference if the story is fatuous, the dialogue idiotic and the acting atrocious. This, it seems to me, is the exact opposite of everything we fought for under the banner of *mise en scène*, when we insisted on the importance of establishing a film's authorship.



Family group from Roger Leenhardt's "Les Dernières Vacances".

LEENHARDT: All the same, it's a curious fact that, at any rate in the sort of American films we have been talking about, the 'author' was to all intents and purposes the producer. He set up a production to satisfy his own tastes, chose the script and the stars, and picked some first-class technician as director. And the interesting point is that many of the producers had themselves started out as writers, so that in effect the scriptwriter's influence extended indirectly over the whole production.

MARCORELLES: I feel, though, that this idea of a personal vision in the cinema was clearly formulated only after the war. In the Thirties there was hardly the kind of passionate championship of certain directors that one finds today.

LEENHARDT: There's one important factor which certainly has quite a bit to do with it. How much criticism was there in France before the war? In 1938, to all intents and purposes,



there was hardly a critic worthy of the name. As soon as critics were born and began to breed, the idea was seized on, explained, developed.

MARCORELLES: Even after the war, apart from André Bazin and yourself, there wasn't much more than a single magazine, *L'Ecran Français*.

RIVETTE: But *L'Ecran Français* did exist, over and above the fact that Bazin, Astruc and Leenhardt wrote for it from time to time. The very fact that there was a periodical, appearing each week, which at least tried to bring critical judgment to bear on all the films shown, helped to create a climate of opinion. You could say the same of *Cahiers du Cinéma*. The magazine is open to criticism, God knows. But by the very fact that it has appeared every month for the last ten years it has created a whole generation of filmgoers in love with the cinema (drunk with it, one might say today). This would never have happened if *Cahiers du Cinéma* hadn't existed.

Now things have gone a stage further. There is a much larger audience with critical awareness, and this has resulted in the formation of little chapels of opinion which hate each other and then love each other again, which survive just a few months before splintering off and reforming in new alignments. One may find it a bit juvenile, but at least it's evidence of a passionate concern with the cinema which would have been inconceivable ten years ago. In 1950, Truffaut, Godard and I, and a few others, met at the Cinémathèque. We became friends simply because there was no one else: we were the only people who went there every evening.

Critics and Creators

MARCORELLES: M. Leenhardt, you were partly responsible, through Bazin, for the creation of a new school of critics. What do you feel about the state of criticism today, particularly as it has developed out of the influence of *Cahiers*?

LEENHARDT: When someone like Claude Roy claims (writing about literature) that creative artists make the best critics, I have my reservations. When an artist in full creative flower suddenly turns a critical eye on his art it can be a valuable and exciting experience; but I believe the function of criticism to be analysis, and quite different from the function of creation, which is synthesis. This is difficult ground for me, as I am myself both critic and director . . . But I don't believe that it is the critic's job to formulate new creative methods, and André Bazin's great quality was precisely this fundamental aloofness which allowed him to observe as a critic. The critical vision of today affects me only in so far as I find in an article or a review a reflection of the writer's own ambitions (in the best sense of the word). This is one of the factors which makes this sort of criticism alive and extremely interesting on a personal level, but which at the same time makes the objectivity and long-term value of its judgments very dubious.

MARCORELLES: Bazin's criticism was exceptional because he was exceptional. But don't you think there might be circumstances in which it was absolutely essential for a critic to be at least a potential film-maker in order to be able fully to understand a film? Isn't this one of the factors which might help to explain the present crisis in criticism?

LEENHARDT: Was Sainte-Beuve a great literary critic? He was wrong in about one out of three of his judgments on his contemporaries, perhaps even two out of three. The fact is, it seems to me, that there are two elements in criticism. On the one hand there is its value as a piece of writing, elegantly phrased and constructed; on the other, its value as a judgment; and here some critics are more often right than others, more perceptive in discovering new paths. My quarrel with present-day critics is that they fill neither bill. They simply do not possess the necessary objectivity, the ability to look at a thing

Lilli Palmer and Michel Auclair in "Le Rendezvous de Minuit".

calmly and classically, which means that in ten years time people will be saying how right they were. Nor does their writing have that intrinsic quality which would make it absorbing to read, no matter how arguable their opinions. I don't think, when one comes down to it, that they are quite serious enough or quite amusing enough.

RIVETTE: To take up this point about the two different kinds of criticism: I believe less and less that it is the critic's job to deliver verdicts. Distinctions between major and minor works of art are made not so much by contemporary critics as by the artists of the next generation, who say "Of our predecessors, we recognise such and such as our masters, even if we travel a different road from theirs. The rest can be relegated to history." I believe this is a law which has been proved by the history of art, and proved again by the history of the cinema. Take a classic case. It was the early twentieth century painters, and not Cézanne's contemporary critics, who claimed that he was the greatest painter of the late nineteenth century; the critics then followed this lead, and gave their sanction. In the same way a positive critical contribution was made, if not by directors at any rate by apprentice directors, who said that Murnau was more important than Pabst, or the other filmmakers whom the historians had previously rated his equal. And the historians have already come round to confirming this judgment, or are in the process of doing so. In the histories of ten or fifteen years ago, Murnau is given much the same space as Robert Wiene. In future, Murnau will have to have ten pages against a paragraph for *Caligari* (which is an important film, all the same), plus a footnote for the rest of Wiene's work. Mizoguchi, too, was in France singled out by a few directors who recognised him as their master: critics and historians will have to follow suit.

LEENHARDT: You are confusing criticism with creativity. It's natural for a young director to try to discover himself through his work and his ambitions, and to try to find his place in the world in relation to his seniors. But this has nothing to do with the critical assessment of art, which must try to find an absolute standard by which it can measure the works that are going to last against the ones that won't.

RIVETTE: Yes, but what I meant was that this function, which is traditionally attributed to the critic, doesn't really belong to him at all. In any case, I believe that it is almost impossible to pronounce a verdict on a contemporary work.

LEENHARDT: Criticism needs a sort of privileged ground—parallel, as it were, to the creative terrain—from which judgments can be made. If there has been some renewal in criticism since the Thirties, it was because Malraux wrote his *Psychology of Art*, and wrote it from the terrain (unusual at the time) of philosophy. And this privileged ground, this parallel terrain, cannot belong to the creative artist.

MARCORELLES: Do we possess all the criteria necessary to draw up a scale of values? Do you feel, for instance, that a history of the cinema is practicable at present?

RIVETTE: Yes, if one excludes the last ten years. To write the history of these ten years would obviously be a fascinating task, but it is equally obvious that the closer one comes to the present day, the more one gets tangled up in polemic and personal preference. I'm judging from my own experience of reseeing at the Cinémathèque the films which I first saw in 1950 or so. Murnau, Stroheim, Griffith are still great; the unimportant films still look unimportant. But when one comes to films made over the last decade, I find that some which I didn't properly understand at the time now look remarkable, while others which I admired seem worthless. It isn't easy to make an objective assessment of something that is close to you.

For example, I saw Resnais' *Muriel* a few days ago. I'm glad I wasn't asked for an opinion on it right away, because I have

since seen it a second time; and I realise that my opinion after a first viewing would have been a mixture of polemic, bile and prejudice about the sort of film I expected from Resnais. It's difficult to absorb a new film straight away, because one begins by superimposing the film one expected, which one wanted to see, and even which one wanted to make oneself. . . . All these barriers must be set aside before one can see the film which is actually there on the screen, and only then can one decide whether or not the director has succeeded on his terms rather than yours. A certain distance is absolutely essential. Spontaneous reactions are all very fine, but they tell you more about the critic than about the film.

LEENHARDT: At the same time, however, I think a critic must stake himself body and soul on his discoveries, at the risk of looking a fool ten years later if he realises that he has backed the wrong horse. The marvellous thing about Apollinaire, or Cocteau, was that they managed to place a finger squarely on the thing that really was important. Or Malraux, writing a preface to Faulkner, saying *this* is important, and being absolutely right.

An Art of Youth

MARCORELLES: Do you feel that there is a cause and effect relationship between the splintering of criticism around 1955 (with the resultant deification of *mise en scène* by some factions, and the deification of the actor by others) and the confusion now reigning in the French cinema?

LEENHARDT: My own answer to that amounts to a confession. I made three serious errors of judgment concerning the cinema and its development. The first, which may appear unimportant although I don't myself think so, concerns the age of creation. Every field of human activity, it is said, has its own optimum creative age. Mathematicians and poets reach the height of their powers while very young. Painters, on the other hand,



Anna Karina in Jacques Rivette's stage production of the play adapted from Diderot's "La Religieuse".

like most novelists, tend to create their major works in middle age.

Now the cinema, historically speaking, was an art of youth. As it evolved, however, I thought it was becoming an art of middle age—which didn't worry me, as it seemed to bring it closer to the novel. This was particularly apparent in the American cinema, where one saw the middle-aged film-makers gaining in maturity and depth what they perhaps sacrificed in youthful brilliance. So I was rather disconcerted by the phenomenon of a few years ago, when youth took over the cinema. This was a really key development, and it forced me to reconsider some of my more general assumptions. If the cinema is an expression of the world of youth, of the thoughts and feelings of young men in their twenties, then it's no longer quite the cinema I envisaged. The parallels I drew were with the novel, but the comparison, perhaps, ought rather to be with poetry.

The second error concerns the respective roles of the director and the scriptwriter. It may be difficult for people now to realise the impact made on the French cinema in the Thirties by the arrival of a brilliant new group of writers. One must remember that before this directors had usually written their own scripts. Suddenly writers appeared on the scene, like the novelist Pierre Bost, the poet Jacques Prévert, the dramatist Georges Neveux. It was they, rather than Carné or Duvivier, who were responsible for our pre-war cinema. They really created it.

So, I told myself, after the war all the young writers would probably turn into wonderful scriptwriters. But it didn't happen like that. The intelligent young men—Astruc, for example—had only one idea in their heads, and that was to climb on to a crane and get the camera moving. There followed a complete confusion in which old hacks had to be dredged up to write scripts, since the writers with talent were either not interested in the cinema at all, or else felt that they were as well qualified as anybody else to be behind the camera. And instead of worrying about the creative problems which telling a story entails, they were busy thinking about what sort of focal aperture to use.

We are not out of the woods yet. Where are the scriptwriters today? Now and again one thinks, well yes, look!, there's one, he's called Marcel Moussy. And what is Moussy doing now? He wants to be a director. There simply aren't any scriptwriters any more.

My third error can be summed up in a sentence which once had a certain truth in it: the cinema is not a spectacle, is not

a public phenomenon, but a personal form of expression rather similar to novel-writing. I thought the cinema was moving towards something more free, more interior, in which the ideal film would be one which one could watch alone at home, stopping at the end of a sequence just as one might pause at the end of a chapter in order better to understand or savour it. We saw what looked like the disappearance of the cinema as spectacle in favour of television, which was intimate and personal certainly, but in a rather different way from the art I had envisaged. Then, in self-defence against television—which is neither one thing nor the other—the cinema was forced back into spectacle, forced in fact to become more spectacular than ever, while the purely personal work of art I had in mind became increasingly a misfit, an economic impossibility.

RIVETTE: The whole question of the scriptwriter is closely linked to the idiot mythology which has grown up recently round the idea of the director as complete creator, a youthful genius who can do anything and everything, and which has resulted in an influx of directors of startling incompetence.

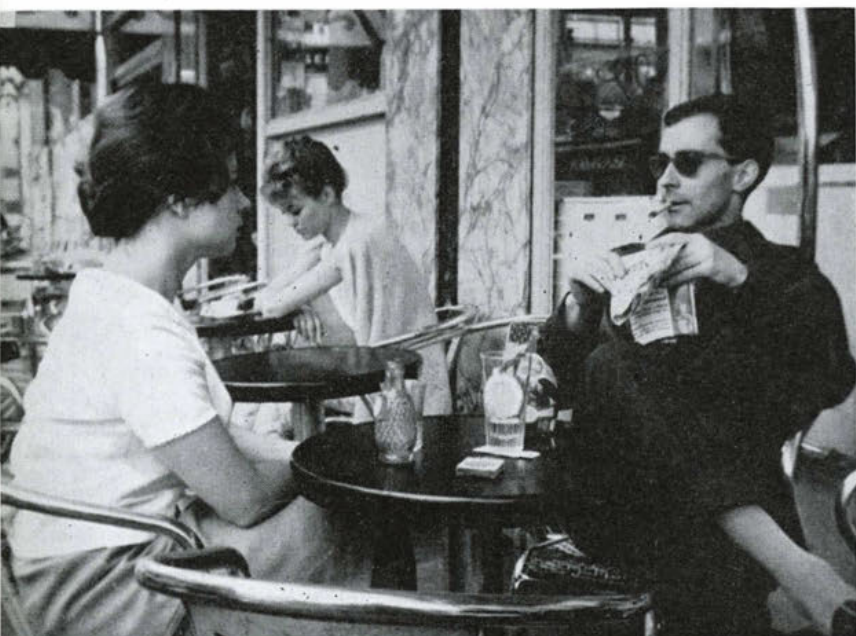
Obviously we—the *Cahiers* team, with Truffaut as chief spokesman—were responsible for this myth, but we were writing at a time when polemics, shock statements like "anybody can make a film," were a necessary reaction against the rigid stratification which was then strangling the cinema. It was a completely closed shop, in which the director spent fifteen years moving from third assistant to second assistant, and finally to assistant director, before getting anywhere; and the writer worked through the same process. The reaction was inevitably violent and uncompromising: all kinds of extreme positions were taken up. And, since 1959 and the birth of the New Wave, all these attitudes have been taken much too literally.

MARCORELLES: It seems to me that the innovations of the New Wave are summed up in Godard's work, and that he stands for the most vigorous new ideas in the cinema. Do you agree?

RIVETTE: It's difficult in a general discussion suddenly to turn to individual cases . . . but of all the new directors, Godard seems to me by far the most talented. In spite of all the paradoxes and apparent contradictions in his work, he is a coherent and deeply reflective artist; and it would be extremely dangerous for anyone less intelligent and less sure-footed to try to follow in his footsteps. Resnais, on the other hand, works more through conscious calculation than intuition, and for that reason he is probably a safer model for the embryo director to follow. Resnais makes film-making look difficult, the result of any amount of patience and effort—which of course it is. Godard makes it all seem so easy. It's a pity that *A Bout de Souffle* helped to create this particular myth, which the rest of Godard's work doesn't really support, but which again influences critics and would-be directors.

LEENHARDT: For me, Godard is without doubt the best of the new directors. The astonishing thing about this generation is that they suddenly just began to create cinema as though born to it. The previous generation—artists like Kast, Resnais, Astruc—came to the cinema after having received their training in literature. For them film-making was difficult. There was a sort of tension, and they felt uneasy when faced by assistant directors who might be much less literate than they were themselves, but who had grown up in the atmosphere of the studios and were completely at home there. But the new generation seemed to have cinema right at their finger tips. They had an ease which probably came from the fact that they were brought up on films, just as much as on literature.

MARCORELLES: What about the older directors whom they admire so much? Hitchcock, for example. M. Leenhardt, you once said that many committed films would be forgotten



"Paris Nous Appartient": Betty Schneider with Jean-Luc Godard, who plays a small part in Rivette's film.



Françoise Prévost in "Paris Nous Appartient".

thirty years from now, but that Hitchcock would remain just as fresh. Do you still feel the same?

LEENHARDT: Yes. Just now I was lamenting the fact that *mise en scène* was assuming too much importance in relation to the script, because content counts for as much as form. Although Sainte-Beuve once wrote that "a work of art is as good as its style," it is rare for a work of literature to be valuable for its style and nothing else. Hitchcock is a stylist, one of the few pure stylists in the cinema, and the elegance and economy of his camera movements are pure pleasure. I sometimes read books for the sheer delight of their language (Racine, for instance, whose psychology—François Mauriac notwithstanding—is puerile), and this is exactly how I view Hitchcock. I am not particularly interested in the plastic values of cinema, but each shot of a Hitchcock film holds me in thrall admiring its delicate musical balance. I'm an ardent admirer of a script-writer's cinema, but I have to admit that *mise en scène* like this is overwhelming.

RIVETTE: One would have to be totally blind to cinema not to recognise Hitchcock's complete mastery. At the same time, though, his direction is often misleadingly praised at the expense of script and story construction, as though it were something existing independently. One gets the impression that when Hitchcock is preparing a film he works out his camera movements at the same time as his story detail, resolving his problems of clarity and economy in both fields simultaneously. His films are never *pure* visual brilliance: they go a lot deeper than that.

MARCORELLES: May we turn, finally, to the present crisis in the French cinema?

LEENHARDT: Firstly, there is the fact that television has arrived, just as it did in America and elsewhere several years ago. Secondly, there is the fact that the cinema was for years a privileged industry, in which everyone was making money and it was difficult to go very far wrong. The commercial structure of the industry has scarcely changed since the Twenties, and there can hardly be another industry in this

position. Today the industry is no longer privileged, it has to fight, and it isn't accustomed to fighting. Hence, the crisis.

One can no longer automatically produce films which will automatically receive distribution and automatically cover their costs. Some other way will have to be found, towards new methods of distribution or perhaps new forms of cinema; and a great deal of imaginative thinking has got to go into solving the problem. But the crisis in itself is a normal and healthy reaction against a long period of privilege, when the cinema lived in a troublefree world of its own.

MARCORELLES: M. Rivette, what do you feel about the opportunities for film-making at present?

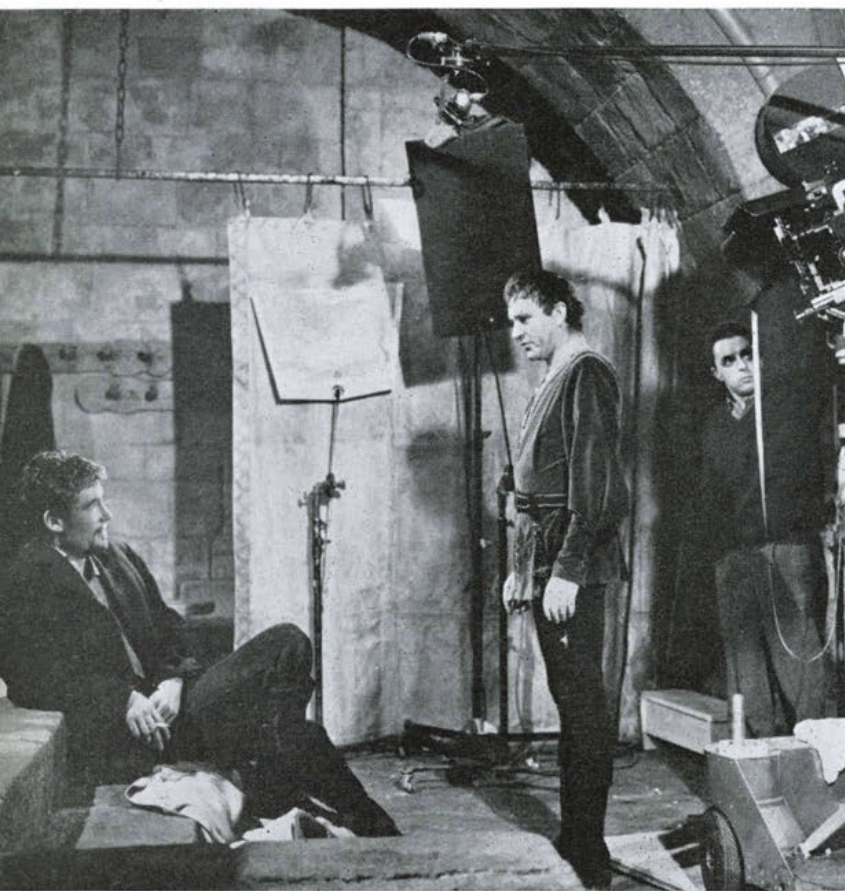
RIVETTE: At the best of times it is all a matter of luck. There is no law of society which says that it is one's *right* to make a film, or that one *may* make a film. If one manages to make a film, fine; if not, then one really has nothing to complain about. It is normal *not* to make films.

LEENHARDT: Yes, one must be realistic about this. People often complain about the stupidity of producers and distributors who prevent them from making films which the public is eagerly waiting for. It just isn't true. After all, the middle men do have some knowledge of their medium . . .

One possible solution is state subsidy, which exists already and doesn't work too badly. Another is television, which eliminates all the worst problems of distribution and gives you a ready-made audience. If a difficult film is shown in an ordinary cinema, the public probably stays away, whereas on television everybody sees it and it stands more chance of being accepted. If only the television companies would agree that it's their right, as well as their duty, to show a number of "difficult" films each year, within the context of their normal programmes, they would find (so long as they didn't show too many) that they would go down very well. This is one way out, at least.

MARCORELLES: Didn't the cinema once reach a sort of state of grace, which it has lost today?

RIVETTE: Yes . . . but since it is lost, it isn't worth talking about.



Peter O'Toole and Richard Burton, king and archbishop in the Hal Wallis production of Anouilh's "Becket".

IN THE PICTURE

The Power of the Circuits

PENELOPE HOUSTON *writes*: At the most recent count there were 2,429 cinemas operating in Britain, and 651 of these (26 per cent) belonged to the Rank and ABC circuits. The percentage itself is high; but the Rank-ABC domination of exhibition is also a matter of the size and location of their cinemas (over 40 per cent of the total seating capacity is concentrated in theatres owned by the two circuits) and of their power in the London area, which alone accounts for more than a quarter of the national box-office takings.

The above figures are taken from the Report of a sub-committee set up last year by the Cinematograph Films Council, under the chairmanship of Sir Sydney Roberts, to enquire into "structure and trading practices." In effect, this means that the sub-committee went into the whole question of the Third Release, the odd man out in the general release situation, and considered a number of complaints from independent exhibitors and producers about the "difficulties and disappointments encountered by those who came up against the power of the vertical combines."

Ten years ago, Rank and ABC between them accounted for

only a third of the total seating capacity, as against 1963's 41.5 per cent, and there was more genuine competition within the pattern of exhibition. But the combined effect of cinema closures and product shortage has been to strengthen the hand of the two major circuits at the expense of the rest. Any distributor looking for an outlet for his film knows that he hasn't a hope of getting his money back if he is denied a circuit release; and the chequered history of the Third Release since its inauguration in 1959 means, as the Report states, that "for all practical purposes there are now only two releases." The Rank Organisation in 1961 estimated that an average return to the distributors would be about £90,000 from a Rank release, £80,000 from ABC, and only £35/40,000 from the Third Release. Understandably, many distributors would rather join the queue for time on a major circuit than take their chance with the Third.

Rank and ABC are in competition with each other at the box-office but not in the matter of acquiring product, since "renters, with one or two exceptions, supply to one or other circuit alone." Such a situation cannot but lead to widespread complaints from independent producers (particularly those whose films are commercially shaky, artistically adventurous, or both) and from the independent exhibitor. The latter's complaint, to quote the Report, is "that he cannot buy the goods at any price, or that when he does get them their value has deteriorated." A comment from the production side: "It is very difficult to get unusual second features, however good, shown by the circuits, because of their resistance to novelty..."

A further and more specialised problem is that Rank and ABC between them own 39 of the 41 cinemas in Britain equipped for 70 mm. projection; and it appears that in this field the "barring" system (whereby one cinema cannot show a film until another has finished with it) operates with particular stringency. The committee were told that if a 70mm. film is showing in Manchester the bar extends over the whole of Lancashire, and that a 70mm. run in Glasgow prohibits the showing of the film anywhere else in Scotland. "An allegedly even worse practice... was the attempt to prevent independents from installing 70mm. equipment by threatening to refuse to supply the necessary prints. In one instance, an exhibitor said that when he asked a renter for a guarantee of 70mm. product before installing the equipment, the renter would not give such a guarantee on the ground that a major circuit cinema five miles away might one day wish to show 70 mm. films itself."

The problem is intensified by the gap between the earnings of the few very successful films and the mediocre many. In the scramble for commercially viable product, Rank and ABC are always negotiating from strength and their competitors from weakness. The sub-committee, while obviously alive to the points at issue, which are set out in a very lucid document, has made recommendations which seem for the most part tentative. They would "welcome any effort within the industry to reopen negotiations for the establishment of an adequate third release," with the proviso that "failing some action of this kind the Board of Trade may wish to consider what further action should be taken." They would "like to see the efforts of the independent producer and the independent exhibitor encouraged"; they believe that "certain reforms are desirable and that they should come from within the industry." They reject, however, a suggestion put forward in a memorandum from the Federation of British Film Makers that the circuits might reorganise their cinemas for booking purposes into regional groups of not more than twenty-five.

The reasoning here throws further light on the extreme complexity of the problem. Box-office returns, in current circumstances, will depend to some extent on the size of the investment; and the assurance of a circuit release acts as an incentive to production. Drastically to reduce the bargaining strength of the circuits—and it's difficult to see any radical change which would *not* involve this—might result in a drying

up of investment capital, so making the situation worse rather than better. The central question, clearly, is how to improve the situation for the independents without undermining that stability which at least ensures some continuity of production. The sub-committee's report throws a bright light on the problem, before passing it back to the industry.

Labyrinth

DEREK HILL writes: Tours '62, Oberhausen '63 and now Annecy '63 have come and gone; and Jan Lenica's *Labyrinth*, a deserved Grand Prix winner three times over, has wound up with only an inappropriate experimental award (Oberhausen) and a critics' prize (Annecy). Admittedly jury decisions are often an exasperating anticlimax to a festival, but this neglect of a major and in some ways revolutionary work has surely damaged the high reputations which these three shorts festivals enjoy.

Lenica has abandoned the ambiguities of *Dom* and the good-natured satire of *Monsieur Tête*. *Labyrinth* uses the increasingly familiar technique of animated steel engravings, already enthusiastically explored for their comic potential by such groups as Biographic. (The same face occurs at one point in *Labyrinth* and *The Plain Man's Guide to Advertising*.) But to Lenica the intense stylisation provided by the contrast between elaborate design and necessarily limited animation does not dictate comedy. One of the achievements of the film is its demonstration that an animated work can range as freely through the emotions as a live-action film.

Labyrinth concerns a modern Icarus, a bowler-hatted gentleman who flies sedately into a city by means of his hand-cranked bird wings. For a moment he believes the city deserted, an ornate, fin-de-siècle ghost town. But a dinosaur skeleton plods the streets and howls at the moon; and the nightmare is upon him. For the city is a reflection of any society—a reflection in which people have taken on the appearance that best shows what they really are. Reptiles and mutations inhabit the houses, devouring the weaker passers-by. A girl rescued from a frock-coated lizard on human legs attacks her rescuer and flings herself back into the creature's paws. A dithering bird with a man's head is enticed through a window by a gipsy whore and the flesh picked clean from his bones. The newcomer finds himself being scientifically measured, fingerprinted and checked by beings anxious to ensure that he conforms to their accepted norm. But a speck of human feeling is enough to show that he does not belong. He endeavours to escape, but is pursued across the sky by flying monsters who peck him to death.

Even for the Polish cinema this is a work of unique bitterness. Indeed it is probably the blackness of its despair which accounts for juries' avoidance of the film. ("You can't be that pessimistic," said Saul Bass, a juror at Tours.) *Labyrinth* hovers somewhere between Kafka country and Blake's inferno. Its dark, unfashionably self-centred loathing of the world in which its creator finds himself is unquestionably the most personal statement yet produced by the animated cinema.

At Annecy, the animators' own festival, Lenica's film outclassed any other entry. But among the several cartoons which did deserve serious interest were two from Lenica's collaborator on *Once Upon a Time* and *Dom*, Walerian Borowczyk, who now works in Paris. Both, improbably, are from TV series: *The Concert of Mr. and Mrs. Kabal* is a splendidly grotesque account of a recital interrupted by a lady's fierce dismembering of her husband's body, which she then stuffs into her piano; and *My Grandmother's Encyclopaedia* is an alphabetical perambulation among still more steel engravings, used with charm and devastating wit.

Paris Notes

LOUIS MARCORELLES writes: The French cinema is currently going through the most serious crisis in its history. Two kinds of films still continue to draw the public: the superspectacles, and the films with which audiences can feel easily at home—movies starring Jean Gabin, for instance, or Italian pictures in the *Hercules* tradition. Of course there's an audience for Godard, Resnais and Antonioni, but if you go to a provincial town you won't find them billed. The gap could hardly be wider between the tastes of the happy few and those of the average spectator. And to try to carry on making films at a cost of two or three hundred thousand pounds, against the general tendency of the industry, seems the purest economic folly.

As for the low budget films, made at a cost of £30,000 or less, can

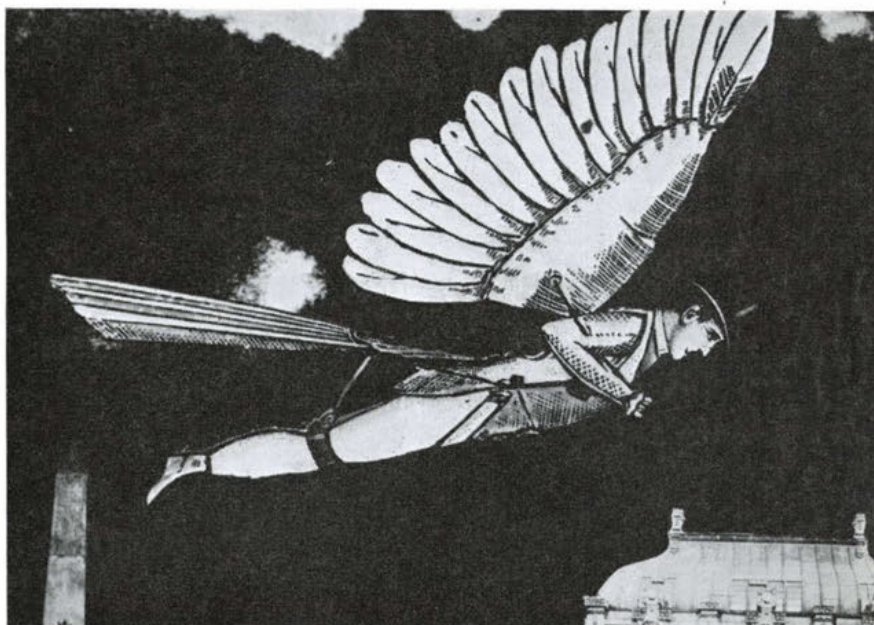
they be sold? Is there enough of a market in specialised cinemas throughout the world to ensure that this kind of film-making is commercially viable? Even the people who run the art houses are bound to think in business terms. And one can't ignore the failure of guidance from the critics, who seem incapable of discovering the innovatory and original in cinema if someone hasn't first given them a lead. The recent misfortunes of Jean-Luc Godard's *Les Carabiniers* are an illustration of the problem.

Filed on a small budget, as was *A Bout de Souffle* in the easier atmosphere of a few years ago, *Les Carabiniers* takes us to an imaginary country. The two central characters, grandly named Ulysses and Michael Angelo, lead an existence as dismal as it is futile. Then one day two cavalymen come in the king's name to call them up for service in the army. Splendid opportunities are dangled before them: theft, rape, adventure. Our two heroes jump at the chance, and are at once revealed as excellent soldiers, second to none in brawling, looting and killing. When the war ends, they go back home with hopes of a reward. But the resistance movement has seized power and the king is in flight. In vain Ulysses and Michael Angelo protest that they have been tricked. They are slaughtered.

This wild theme, borrowed from an Italian playwright, is developed by Godard without any sort of sentimental concession. Linking titles written by Godard himself, music in the manner of *The Threepenny Opera*, cut in newsreel shots of war, a constantly chopped rhythm, prevent the spectator's sympathies from crystallising for or against anybody. Rarely, I feel, has a film gone so far towards nihilism and also had so much of the quality of a personal confession. The fact that Godard has dedicated *Les Carabiniers* to Jean Vigo should shock only those who make a religion out of commitment. But in the face of a statement of such moral emptiness, the Paris press has almost without exception cried scandal. Unhappily there is still no place in the cinema for the equivalent of a book published in a limited edition. And French criticism, alas, is moribund.

The New Wave spirit (as we understood it four years ago) is somewhat revived by *La Dérive*, a film shot in Montpellier and the surrounding countryside by Paule Delsol, a young novelist born in Indo-China. Her subject, as she defines it: "The portrait of a lazy, ambitious and sentimental girl." Jacquie, her heroine, is a girl of about twenty, anxious to get away from home and routine, dithering between dreams of a *grand amour* and more material ambitions. We leave her as we find her, embarking on yet another profitless love affair.

La Dérive is subtle, direct, striking in its construction, though open to criticism in detail for sequences which haven't worked or bungled ideas. Most remarkable is the sense of sympathetic understanding between the director and the character she's created on the screen. The film is honest about a character and a state of mind: a 20-year-old girl, in a particular place at a moment in time. Is this enough, though, to rouse the interest of the critics, when the film has no snob appeal and can only score through its own sensitivity and intelligence? Or are we entering a period when this kind of independent



Jan Lenica's "Labyrinth".

cinema, if it's to survive, will have to move over to 16mm., with still lower budgets? The Grand Prix at the Sestri Levante festival of Latin American films went to the Mexican *En El Balcon Vacio*, a film running just over an hour, shot in 16mm. and made at a cost of about \$4,000. Would Godard have done better to make *Les Carabiniers* on 16mm?

Experiment in San Francisco

ALBERT JOHNSON writes: The small but energetic group of San Francisco film-makers has recently undergone a renaissance. Berkeley, the University town across the bay, is the centre of activity, and the film programmes presented by the University itself (including first showings of such works as *Le Amiche*, *Paris Nous Appartient* and *Los Golfos*) are indicative of the growing recognition in academic circles of the importance of international as well as domestic works. In addition, a sort of film-makers' club called Canyon Cinema, launched by Ernest Callenbach, the editor of *Film Quarterly*, and Bruce Baillie, a local cineaste, has enjoyed a lively success with weekly showings of silent classics and new experimental films. Stan Brakhage, the high priest of American "free cinema", now lives in San Francisco, and his rather bold and often staggeringly obscure films continue to keep the critical air aflame. The two most consistently interesting (and undiscovered) film-makers in the Bay area are Bruce Baillie and William Hindle.

Baillie's first film, *On Sundays* (1961) was a Faulkneresque fable about a Chinese nymph and her sinister protector, set among half-deserted tenements in San Francisco, a region of derelicts. Except, perhaps, for a strong, early Von Sternbergian liking for picturesque rubble and steam shovels (à la *Salvation Hunters*) there was a sufficiently individual stamp on the images to ensure that even the wastelandish atmosphere Baillie strove for never became monotonous. *The Gymnasts* (1962) observes the athlete-as-hero, with the ritualistic exercises of gymnasts set to carousel music and filmed with a sharp eye for the men's narcissistic self-absorption and discipline. One senses an undercurrent of loneliness, and a pity for the graceful athletes who yield to the poetry of disciplined motion, and then retire from it in silence and resignation as they go back to their encounters with mankind.

Baillie's films exhibit a wide range of experiment: in *Mr. Hayashi* (1962) we get a documentary close-up of a gentle old Japanese-

American. In his more recent work this year, *Have You Thought of Talking to the Director*, *Everyman*, *The News No. 3* and *A Hurrah for Soldiers*, a flair for satire and angry political reactions is revealed.

The atmosphere of Canyon Cinema is one of commitment and social protest, and audiences are symbolically artistic in manner of dress and behaviour, with an odd sense of fun and cynicism about them all. In a mad burst of whimsy, Baillie recently pieced together a Maria Montez film and a Rin Tin Tin serial, presenting it as a hilarious feature called *The Beast of Utah*. Asked for a statement for his film distributor's brochure, he offered the following: "My only quotation from myself—we were sitting around these days talking about the magnificent roasting duck we have in the oven. I doubt anyone has gone to find a duck and I doubt there is a cook in the kitchen."

William Hindle, who is employed in television work for a San Francisco station, made as his first independent short *Pastoral d'Été*, a masterwork of that genre which links views of nature with the lulling flow of programmatic music. After this, a change of pace to *Experiment on Experiment* (1962), a television film describing Blake Edwards' location shooting in San Francisco for his thriller *Experiment in Terror*. Hindle's camera captures all the turmoil, exasperation and humour of commercial film-making, reminding one rather of the National Film Board's "Candid Eye" series. At one point Blake Edwards talks glibly about movie-making, his personality sharp, sardonic and self-assured. Later, we watch Lee Remick rehearsing in the chaos of the Roaring Twenties nightclub, surrounded by bored technicians and self-consciously glamorous extras. The observation is acute and intelligent.

Another short, a piece of fledgling documentary called *The Hard Swing* (1962) has also attracted attention. A first film by 21-year-old Michael Putnam, it describes with taste, simplicity and truth the preparation of a seasoned stripper for her act at the President Folies, a burlesque house in San Francisco. Slowly, rather wearily, to the piped-in sounds of off-colour jokes and clanging music on-stage, she goes through her toilette. On stage, as the camera follows her in and out of the shadows, she becomes a ravishing odalisque for a time; then she trudges listlessly back to her dressing-room, where she sips tea while waiting for her next show. The authenticity of *The Hard Swing* should make those who dared to praise *Gypsy* hide their heads in shame. It is the best American film on the present world of burlesque, and one believes that it was always like this: in every way it is a document.

Nonpareil

GARBO REVIVALS SEEM to come round every five years or so; and they must be events which other actresses look forward to with something less than enthusiasm. This time M-G-M did the fans particularly proud, with the Empire given over to a prolonged late summer season. Sceptically, they consulted the teenage augurs at advance showings before committing themselves so heavily. Response favourable; and the old friends—*Ninotchka*, *Queen Christina*, *Camille*, etc.—were given a ceremonial unveiling. Bulletins from the Empire reported audiences so large and enthusiastic that the company might be encouraged, next time, to bring out some of the films that nobody has seen in years.

The critics and columnists, dusting off the usual superlatives, found their all too easy comparison to hand. "Garbo could have played Cleopatra with her little finger," declared Mrs. Gilliatt, conjuring up a rather unlikely image. "Might the Cleopatra which so sadly eluded Miss Taylor have yielded to Garbo?" enquired Miss Powell, before concluding that, on the whole, it might not. Anne Sharpley, in the *Evening Standard*, took a tougher line. "Nothing," she wrote firmly, "could be more different from the gold-encrusted voluptuous Miss Taylor who is supposed to be the one we're all mad about." And an *Evening Standard* colleague, Barbara Griggs, followed the obligatory Taylor comparison with a suggestion that even Fox's *Marilyn* couldn't really stand the competition: early Monroe films "are already tarnished by a faint period comicality." The critic of *The Times* hazarded a suggestion that perhaps Garbo might have been slightly miscast in *Camille*, but followed up with an immediate retraction. "Who, offered the alternative of being wrong with Garbo, would choose to be right with anyone else?" The "ominously weird appeal" (Miss Sharpley's definition) seems to carry a higher voltage charge than ever. Poor Monroe; poor Taylor; poor eclipsed sirens.

Fredric March and John Frankenheimer on the set of "Seven Days in May".





Delphine Seyrig in "Muriel".

FESTIVALS

Venice

ON THE EVIDENCE OF the Italian films shown at Venice during the first week, *Il Boom* seems to be dying fast, with directors scurrying around like hypnotised rabbits in the triple wake of Antonioni, Rosi and a well-milked neo-realism. At the time of writing, Rosi's own *Le Mani sulla Città* had not yet been shown, and if it lives up to the brilliance of *Salvatore Giuliano*, should walk away with a good many honours. But the official entry, Castellani's *Mare Matto*, which announced itself hopefully as "a picture of the life of a seafaring folk," turned out to be a characteristically self-indulgent specimen of latter-day neo-realism, with Lollobrigida biting amorous pieces out of Belmondo, Belmondo overdoing his uncouth charmer act, and everybody else screaming their heads off interminably.

Equally characteristic was *Un Tentativo Sentimentale*, shown in the *opera prima* section. This first film by two scriptwriters, Pasquale Festa Campanile and Massimo Franciosa, is a love story by *Il Mare* out of Antonioni, set in an airport waiting room, a decorative villa and a deserted beach, littered with lovers, enigmatic spouses and suicidal girls, as pretentious as you can get, and with the most risible dialogue of the entire Festival. *Il Terrorista*, another first film directed by Gianfranco De Bosio, at least had an intelligent script which tackled a subject hitherto shied away from—the splitting of the wartime Resistance into opposing groups swayed by conflicting political interests. But in trying to emulate Rosi's cool mixture of documentary objectivity and aesthetic beauty, De Bosio has only produced a choppy, turgid melodrama which looks much like any other Resistance film.

Luckily, Brunello Rondi's *Il Demonio*, another first film,

remained to prove that Italy still commands untapped talent. The influence is undoubtedly Rosi again, though here thoroughly integrated into a personal style. A curious, brilliant film, half documentary, half *Dracula*, *Il Demonio* is set in a village in Southern Italy, and tells the factual story of an obsessively erotic girl held to be possessed by a devil, who is exorcised by the priest, stoned and driven out by superstitious villagers, and finally stabbed to death by her lover after he has carved the sign of the cross on her breast. Like *Salvatore Giuliano*, the film is a sharp contrast of blacks and whites, dark interiors and rocky landscapes, a story of violence held at arm's length and coolly dissected, cutting sharply away into laconic long-shot whenever it seems likely to spill over emotionally. With stunning confidence, Rondi juggles a bizarre love story, documentary details of superstition, and hauntingly beautiful images into a unity which is at once a reportage and an aesthetic experience.

Il Demonio is a revelation which justified the whole *opera prima* section, but the other first films I saw are unlikely to set any fires alight, except perhaps the Swedish *A Sunday in September*, directed by Jörn Donner and chronicling a young couple's progress from courtship to divorce. Admittedly, the film is pretentiously divided into four movements each introduced by an interminable mood sequence, with the whole set against a *cinéma-vérité* inquest into love; admittedly, too, the dialogue is undistinguished, and the musical score incredibly ugly. Nevertheless it is beautifully acted by Harriet Andersson and Thommy Berggren, and shows an attention to detail and an ability to project which suggest that Donner, once he sobers up after this heady orgy, might become a name to reckon with.

1963 has been a poor year everywhere. Still, there was *Muriel*, ou le temps d'un retour, to my mind a masterpiece, and



Dahlia Lavi and Frank Wolff in "Il Demonio".

Resnais' most intricate examination of the structures of memory. Resnais himself evidently feels that *Muriel* should be more readily understood than the ambiguities of *Marienbad* (or, as the Unifrance handout endearingly mistyped it, "*Resnais a voulu que son nouveau film fut d'une écriture plus 'lisible' que le président*": so much for your literary pretensions, Mongénéral): nevertheless, *Muriel* is so richly counterpointed visually that it is difficult to seize, let alone write about, after a single viewing. Suffice it to say here that Delphine Seyrig is remarkable as the woman who summons her lover of twenty years ago in order to recapture the taste of love; and that Resnais uses colour to cast a nostalgic aura of the picture-postcard and underline his theme of the elusiveness of memory. Every element contributes to the atmosphere of instability and deception: the heroine runs an antique shop from her home, where everything is for sale; a passionate gambler, she submits herself nightly to the vagaries of chance; the action takes place in Boulogne, destroyed by bombardment and since replaced by a new, strange city; and her stepson, haunted by his military service in Algeria and by an unhappy affair with a girl called Muriel, uses a film projector (factory of illusions) to recall both experiences simultaneously. Using overlapping sound, and intercutting brief extraneous shots to hinge sequences or recall others, Resnais has made a film which might be perhaps described as polyvisual and polyphonic: at all events, a major work.

The new films from Kurosawa (*High and Low*), Kaneto Shindo (*Ningen*) and Bardem (*Nunca Pasa Nada*) were all turgid and disappointing, but two other films call for comment: Berlanga's *El Verdugo*, and Jiri Weiss' *The Golden Fern*. *El Verdugo* is Berlanga's blackest comedy and best film. Rumour (apparently unfounded) had it that the Spanish authorities demanded its withdrawal (the Bardem film was the official entry). However this may be, the film provided the Festival's one ugly moment when a young man distributing anti-Fascist leaflets in front of the Palazzo was violently dragged away by vigilant police. Seen in Spanish context, *El Verdugo* certainly has its inflammatory side. A young man blithely agrees to replace his father-in-law as public executioner because the official position will make it easier for him to obtain a flat for his wife and baby. All goes well until he is finally called to an execution, and is forced to officiate. Never again, he protests in horror. "I, too, said that, the first time,"

the old man whispers comfortingly to the baby. Perhaps some scenes succumb to the old sin of Latin garrulity, but there is plenty of visual wit and flashes of devastating satire.

The Golden Fern is an attractive Czech fantasy about a shepherd who conjures a wood-nymph from the forest, and falls in love with her. Called away to the wars, he dallies with a general's daughter, and performs three deeds of knight errantry for her before the forest avenges the abandoned nymph. Like most of Weiss' films, *The Golden Fern* is manderlingly heavy, but it is exquisitely shot by Bedrich Batkt with a genuine fairy-tale charm; and the opening sequence, where the shepherd steals the magic fern from a midnight forest, has protecting birds which are a good deal more alarming than Hitchcock's.

This year the Retrospectives (both excellent) were devoted to Buster Keaton and the early Russian cinema. Thanks to the National Film Theatre, though, Londoners can often respond with a blasé "déjà vu" to what may be untold riches to others. The Russian programme, for instance, included films like *Shchors*, *Chapayev*, *The Last Night*, *Strike*, *Svenigora*, *Mother*, and *We From Kronstadt*. Among the newcomers I picked up Protazanov's bizarre constructivist fantasy, *Aelita* (1924), and got lost in its Caligariesque complexities (Russian subtitles, no commentary) which appear to involve madmen discovering life on Mars and effecting a revolution there. The plastic costumes and Barbara Hepworth sets of curved wooden frames and stretched strings make it an oddity—but, I suspect, all very dated. Kuleshov's *Extraordinary Adventures of Mr. West in the Land of the Bolsheviks* (1924), on the other hand, remains a fresh and delightful comedy, with considerable contemporary application. Mr. West, living image of Harold Lloyd in Stars and Stripes socks, smiles bravely and draws moral strength from his wife's photograph in the darkest moments of his adventures among the Bolsheviks; and his bodyguard, Jed, in stetson and woolly leggings, stoutly pursues the malefactors, firing his six-gun from the top of a taxi and roping motor-cyclists like steers. A genuinely inventive comedy with a gentle line in satire, which affirms Kuleshov as an important director. Then, having to leave Venice after the first week, I sadly handed over Keaton to John Gillett.

TOM MILNE

A Keaton Postscript

AT THE TIME OF WRITING, we are only two days into the Keaton retrospective, but already there have been numerous delights. Apart from nine features, several early shorts are being shown which often hint at ideas to be fully developed in the later pictures. Thus, in *The Paleface*, Buster is chased by two rival Indian tribes literally up hill and down dale, and in *The Boat*, a family excursion leads to total disaster after Buster has fought a lengthy battle with nautical gadgets (reminiscent of *The Navigator*) and concludes with the family landing on a dark shore from their improvised lifeboat. "Where are we?" they ask, only to be answered by *The End* title.

Of the early features, neither *The Three Ages* nor *Seven Chances* is wholly successful, as they are both burdened with slightly plodding narratives. The former, a mild take-off on the interlinking stories of *Intolerance*, is at its best in the arena sequences (with Buster leading a dog-drawn chariot), while the latter, after a slow beginning in which the hero learns that he can only inherit a fortune if he finds a bride immediately, erupts hilariously into one of the great Keaton sequences. Pursued by a thousand white-gowned would-be brides, he runs headlong through the city into the countryside where, after a momentary respite, he descends a series of mountain slopes pursued not only by the brides but by hundreds of menacing boulders. Marvellously shot, it shows Keaton as the supreme visual stylist of American silent comedy.

Of the remaining competition entries, Louis Malle's *Le Feu Follet* has made the strongest impression, not only because it has probably the Festival's best performance (Maurice Ronet)

and photography (Ghislain Cloquet) but for its unequivocal handling of a difficult subject: a young alcoholic revisits his friends and various haunts and then decides to kill himself, which he does in the last shot. Adapted from a novel by the collaborationist writer Drieu La Rochelle, Malle's film is never morbid for its own sake, but presents its case history with much careful interior observation and shows that Bresson can be a more useful influence than either Resnais or Godard. It is Malle's best film to date.

JOHN GILLET

Trieste

FLYING SAUCERS WERE in for a bit of launching trouble at this first Festival of *Fantascienza* films—at the outset, a spiky boycott from the International Federation of Film Producers; then a week of cloudbursts which sent would-be travellers to Mars racing down a precipitous hill from outdoor projections in the courtyard of the medieval castle to the indoor auditorium at the Roman Theatre, the runners ushered all the way by a polyglot chorus of Science Fiction 'Celebrities', each with his own quibbling conception of what constitutes an SF film, and each staunchly adamant that a different 95 per cent of the entries simply had no business being invited at all.

Two of the new features presented—the Czech *Ikaría XB 1* and the Soviet *The Amphibious Man*—were splendid and imaginative films. Jindrich Polak's *Ikaría* (awarded the Gold Spaceship, *ex aequo* with Marker's *La Jetée*) is probably the most believable and dignified science fiction made anywhere since the war; at any rate the only film ever made in which passengers of a space ship behave like adult, intelligent and sophisticated beings.

Several centuries from now, when the world has united for the peaceful exploration of space, a crew of forty men and women are travelling towards a distant "White Star". They nearly crash into what had seemed to be a flying saucer, but on closer inspection turns out to be a ghost spaceship which had been sent up way back in 1983, a weird derelict floating tomb inhabited by leering skeletons. There is evidence that the passengers have wiped each other out in some sordid struggle for power. As they leave this "relic from the century of Auschwitz and Hiroshima," two *Ikaría* men are accidental victims of some 20th-century "Tigerfun Poison Gas".

There is much subsequent action—a pilot goes mad, rays from a mysterious sun put them all to sleep for days—before, finally, a baby born on board is held up to witness the dazzling vision of the canal networks and cities of the new planet. These incidents emerge with the full-bloodedness of a Jack London or Conrad sea-adventure. But the strongest impression is made not by the action but by the whole presentation of daily life as lived on the giant ship. In Jan Zazvorka's superb sets (quite costly, they are now being reworked into a series of children's films), our crew gyre through a fascinating and complicated routine of space gastronomy and space gymnastics, with every few light years a space ball for which they all dress up and go through the motions of a startling atonal twist. These passages are trance-like, and the final effect of the oddly-clad intellectuals semi-sleepwalking through the corridors of their Hotel Cosmos is a sort of Space Marienbad.

The Russians entered Gostjev's *The Celestial Brothers*, a documentary on launching tests and techniques, and Kazancev-Tjerjentjev's ingratiating *The Amphibious Man*, who swam quite adroitly in waters lying somewhere between *Swan Lake* and *Flash Gordon*. At a South American fishing port (convincingly constructed at the Black Sea Studios—all the signs in Spanish, except for one curious poster in English advertising a product called "Old Foot Sores"), the pearl-fishers are being exploited by a nasty hidalgo, Don Pedro, who is generally viewed from a stark low angle against a large crucifix. A poor girl named Alicia, who has been forced to accept Don Pedro's marriage proposal, is snatched from a shark's jaws by the "Marine Devil", a creature who has been busy scaring everyone in those parts to death. Actually, he is the cultivated son of a gentle scientist who dreams of a republic of the future where men shall be free and amphibious. The boy, enamoured of Alicia, sheds scales and helm and follows her to town, where he creates havoc by distributing the fish, his brothers, to the poor, before being finally driven back again to his watery life.

On paper it may look utterly idiotic, but the film is strangely moving. Shimmering colour photography and subtle filter-work are fine fairy-tale assets; Korieniev is a sympathetic *jeune premier*, like a more virile Nureyev; the underwater scenes are stunning, especially a dream ballet in which he imagines Alicia also to have become a sea-devil and they go through a fanciful underwater honeymoon. SF or not, the film is a lyrical work which fully merited its Silver Spaceship.

(Continued on page 207)

Astronaut in "Ikaría XB 1".





Above: Brigitte Bardot, Georgia Moll, Jack Palance, against a background of film posters. Right: Palance and Brigitte Bardot. Below: Bardot, Michel Piccoli, Fritz Lang (back to camera) and Jack Palance.



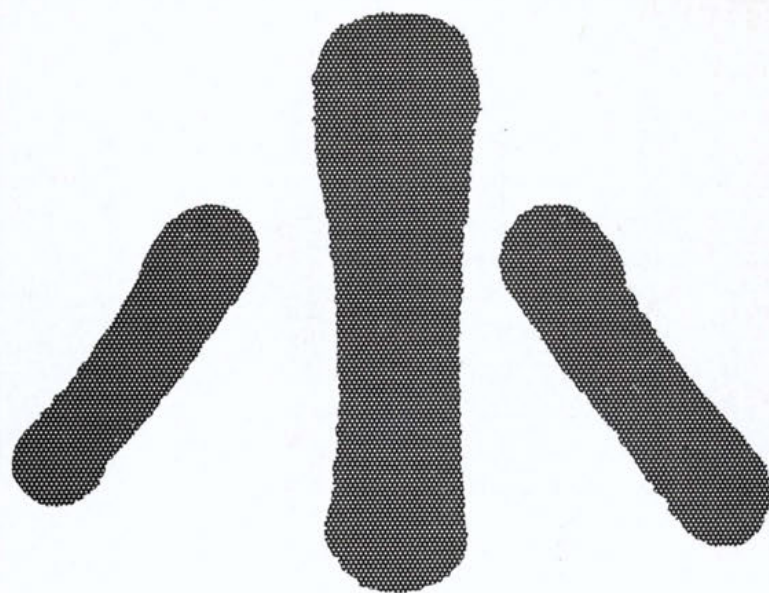
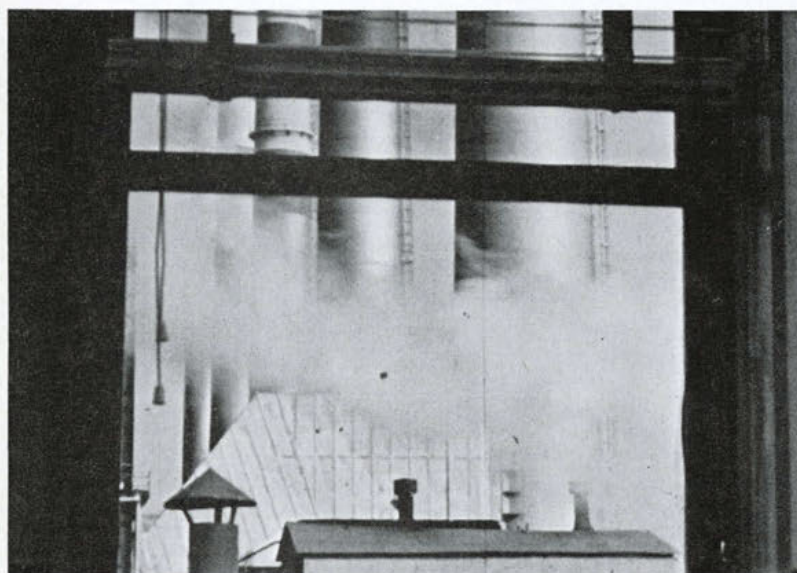
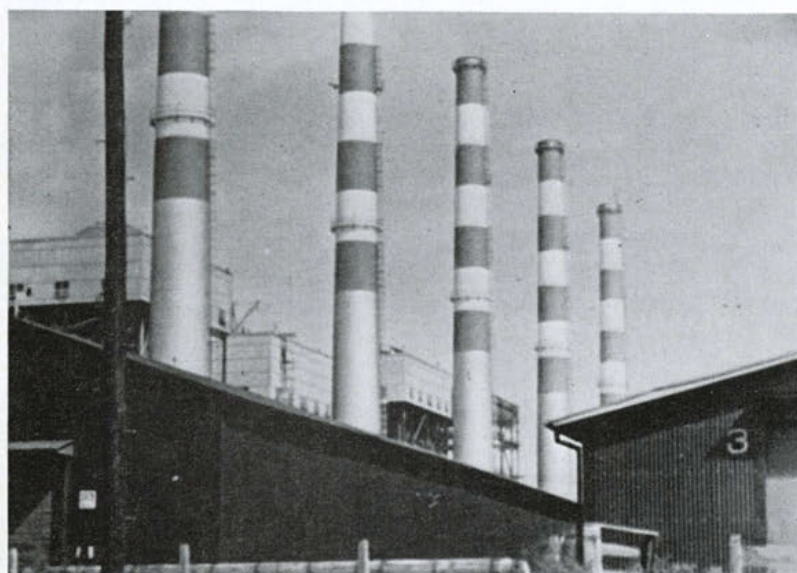
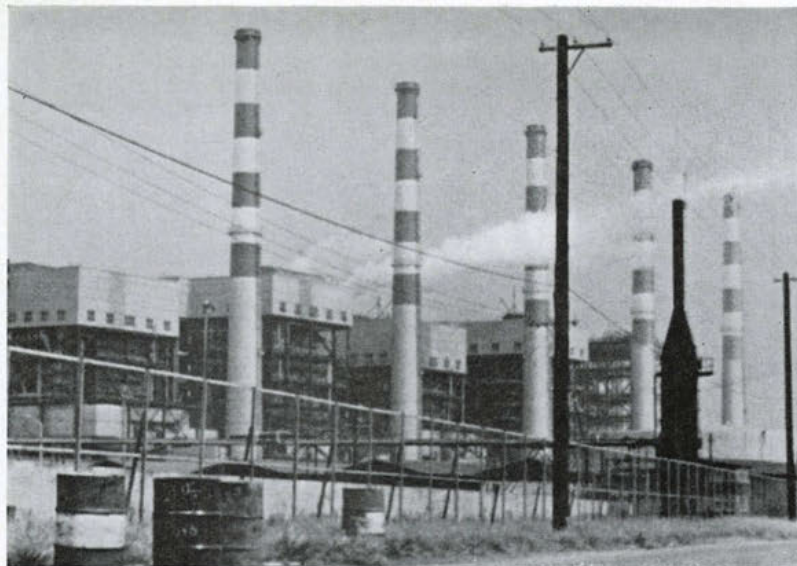
Opposite page. Above: The film within a film. Michel Piccoli, Lang, Palance and (with clapper-board) Godard. Below: Brigitte Bardot, unfamiliar in the Karina-style black wig which she wears for some scenes in the film.



LE MÉPRIS

FILMED on location in Rome and Capri, Jean-Luc Godard's latest film, *Le Mépris*, based on Alberto Moravia's novel *Il Disprezzo*, is about a writer (Michel Piccoli) working on a script for a film of *The Odyssey*, who discovers that his wife (Brigitte Bardot) despises him, and tries to come to terms with his life through the world of Homer. Fritz Lang makes his star acting debut, in effect playing himself, as the director of the film within the film, with Jack Palance as his tyrannical producer, and Georgia Moll as the producer's devoted secretary. The camerawork, of course, is by Raoul Coutard, in Franscope and Technicolor.





**FLAVOUR OF
GREEN TEA
OVER RICE**



BY TOM MILNE

THE TWO MOST OBVIOUS and unwavering characteristics of an Ozu film are familiar enough by now: in subject-matter, the rigid adherence to the *shomin-geki* genre, dealing with the lives and domestic problems of middle-class families; and in technique, the stationary camera fixed some three feet above the floor and gazing unwinkingly at the characters without benefit of such devices as fades or dissolves. Camera angles are rare, tracking shots even rarer, pans almost non-existent; often (*Good Morning, An Autumn Afternoon*), the camera never moves at all from one end of the film to the other.

Ozu is frequently described, with good cause, as the most Japanese of directors, and is at once the easiest and most difficult to write about. Phrases like Donald Richie's "Ozu's world, its stillness, its nostalgia, its hopelessness, its serenity, its beauty . . ." tend to roll comfortably (even though accurately) off the pen of a critic faced with the task of conveying the hypnotic, deeply emotional quality of films which all seem much the same—same sets, same stories, same camera set-ups, same rhythm, same actors even—and which yet retain their power to absorb even when viewed one after another, or for a second or third time. It is a little like looking at those endless Picasso variations on the dove, where the simplicity of line would appear to leave little scope, and yet the subtle new perceptions keep on coming.

Exactly *how* Ozu does it will probably remain his secret, and the difficulty of analysing his work is increased by the fact that in the West we have only been able to see a pitiful handful of the fifty-four films which he has directed since his debut in 1927 with *Sword of Penitence* (*Zange no Yaiba*) up till last year's *An Autumn Afternoon* (*Samma no Aji*). To be precise, the recent NFT season brought the total of Ozu films seen in London to eight, and the London Festival will add one more—none of them shown commercially. Until the NFT season, in fact, trying to assess Ozu's work seemed to be rather like trying to analyse the work of a director like Ford on the basis of the post-war Westerns, without knowing that a few years earlier he had made films like *The Grapes of Wrath*, *The Long Voyage Home*, *Tobacco Road* and *They Were Expendable*. There are still huge gaps, of course, but on the evidence of the 1932 silent film, *I Was Born, But . . .*, it appears that Ozu's development has been remarkably consistent, a process of refinement along a single track rather than a series of adventures down convergent paths.

* * *

His most recent, and to my mind most masterly film, *An Autumn Afternoon*, is worth fairly close analysis as it shows his method at its most completely formal. The story, as usual, is a simple one about a widower, Hirayama San, who realises that it is time his daughter, who keeps house for him, found a husband. The film keeps an even, witty keel as Hirayama goes composedly and purposefully about his matchmaking task, and the daughter is quite agreeable, especially when she discovers that her proposed husband is a young man she is already half in love with. A setback comes when they find that this young man is already bespoken, but another prospect is chosen, the daughter finds him acceptable, and the marriage takes place. The film closes on a strangely moving, almost cathartic note of mingled grief, resignation and tranquillity when Hirayama, alone at home after his self-sufficient younger son has gone to bed, breaks down and weeps quietly. Apart from one deeply poignant moment when the daughter realises she cannot marry the man she loves, the tone of the film has hitherto been mainly light, often humorous,

occasionally ribald. Nothing, apparently, has prepared for the emotional depth of the last scene, yet it is a perfectly natural climax towards which the whole film has been imperceptibly moving through a mosaic of characters and incidents which interlock, sometimes obviously and sometimes obliquely, to illuminate the underlying theme of loneliness.

On the most obvious level, there is the character of "The Gourd", an elderly teacher who is given a reunion dinner by his middle-aged ex-pupils after one of them has run into him by chance. At the dinner, the Gourd gets roaring drunk and has a whale of a time. Hirayama is detailed to see him home, only to discover that he no longer teaches, but runs a scruffy noodle-shop with his unmarried daughter. Later, the Gourd gets drunk again, and pours out his loneliness and his guilt about his daughter, who has become a sour spinster. In retrospect, the reunion dinner and the old man's enjoyment of it take on a new pathos; and Hirayama, through his pity, is brought face to face with the future.

Similar, but more subtle, is the role played by Hirayama's friend, Kawai. We first meet him at the very beginning of the film when he plants the idea of marriage in Hirayama's mind. Very soon after we acquire two apparently unimportant pieces of information about him: he dislikes the Gourd, and refuses to attend the reunion (though he does); and when Hirayama asks him to go for a drink with another friend, Professor Horei, he refuses as he has tickets for a baseball game (in fact, he does go). Approximately an hour later in the film, there is a very brief scene at Kawai's house, when he and Professor Horei, in revenge for an earlier joke, hoax Hirayama into thinking that his marriage arrangements have fallen through. Kawai's wife overhears, and puts Hirayama out of his misery by telling him the truth. The scene is insignificant in itself, and could well have taken place in the *saké* shop where the earlier joke was perpetrated, but Ozu obviously chose this setting because he needed to introduce Kawai's wife at this point. We suddenly discover that Kawai has a charming wife and a very happy home life, and this fact illuminates the earlier behaviour of both men. Obviously Kawai's earlier refusal of the two invitations came because opportunities for conviviality and conversation mean little enough to him; and, by extension, his refusals point up Hirayama's eagerness to take up offers of companionship.

When, for example, he goes to the Gourd's noodle-shop for the second time, to deliver a gift of money, he is greeted by a repair-shop mechanic who says that he had served under Hirayama during the war. Although Hirayama obviously does not recognise him, he readily accepts an invitation to celebrate their meeting. They repair to a bar where the loneliness theme is furthered on two levels. Firstly, in the nostalgic talk and sing-song recalling wartime comradeship; and second, more importantly, in the woman behind the bar who, as the father later tells his children, looks like their dead mother. Later still the elder son goes with his father to the bar to examine the lady, and roundly declares that she doesn't look at all similar. "No," the father agrees dreamily and with unshaken confidence, "not if you look too closely, but she does." Treated lightly, and completely without emotional stress so that one is almost unaware of their role in the mosaic, these scenes yet add their grain to the weight that is building up. Then there is Professor Horei, also a widower, recently remarried to a young wife, and the object of a barrage of ribald jokes about virility pills and dropping dead from exhaustion—a painful question-mark about the future. And finally, at the centre of the film, but again

apparently connected only in a loose "family chronicle" sense, are the scenes involving Hirayama's married son and his wife. Most of the time we see them they are bickering about money which his father has given them for a new refrigerator. They finally come to an agreement where, if he spends some of it on golf clubs, she will buy a new handbag. Maliciously, though affectionately, Ozu records their reconciliation: they have, through all their squabbles, something which the father unconsciously but desperately seeks—the security and companionship of marriage.

It is difficult, without literally re-telling the entire film, to convey the manner in which each scene is dependent on every other scene for its meaning. Perhaps the most illuminating comparison is with music: each sequence comes like the entry of a new subject in a sonata, which is then developed and counterpointed with the other themes already introduced. Ozu, it is said, considers the preparation of the script to be the most important part of film-making, and will spend up to a year with his faithful collaborator, Kogo Noda, on the elaboration of a script. Even judging mainly by the subtitles, it is obvious that the dialogue is not only rich and probing but capitally important, but it would be a mistake to suggest that the script takes precedence over the *mise en scène*: they are, in the fullest sense of the word, complementary.

The action of *An Autumn Afternoon* takes place within a strictly limited number of settings: Hirayama's house and his office, the son's flat, Kawei's house and office, the noodle-shop, and four bars or restaurants (in addition there are two brief exteriors: a railway station, and a rooftop used for golf practice). Each scene is introduced by its own establishing shots. The film opens, for example, with two different shots of factory chimneys; a third shot through a window framing the chimneys; a fourth showing an empty corridor; a fifth showing the widower at his desk. The sixth shows a secretary entering: Hirayama questions her about another girl who is away getting married, and jokingly says "Your turn next"; her reply that she has to look after her father introduces the subject of the film.

Each time the film moves from one locale to another, the new scene is introduced by its establishing shots, so that at any point in the film one knows not only where one is but where one is going to be. These establishing shots are, of course, instantly recognisable, though they may contain minor variations, indicating time of day (for instance, one particular shot of the block of flats where the son lives shows washing

hanging on every balcony). A more subtle use is made of the corridor which introduces Hirayama's home. Normally the camera has opened up on the empty corridor, and we watch the sliding door at the far end open to let someone enter. The last sequence, however, after the wedding, opens with the corridor shot, held, nobody enters; cut to the living-room where the two sons and daughter-in-law are awaiting Hirayama's return, and one of them says "He's late." There is no reason why anyone should have come through that door, but the fact that it does not open adds a note of foreboding to the words "He's late," which lingers over the final sequence of Hirayama's grief.

But these shots seem to have another function over and above "establishing". They are always of inanimate objects—a corridor, a block of flats, chimneys, a pile of petrol drums, a neon sign—and the first shot in an establishing sequence never contains human figures (though subsequent shots may—someone passing across the far end of the corridor, for example). The idea of the transience of human life is basic to Buddhist thought: human existence is a mere drop in the ocean of time. And herein lies, perhaps, one of the secrets of the tranquillity, the deep reconciliation, which pervades Ozu's work. Each of his scenes is introduced by an object, durable and immovable; against it, his characters live out their lives, and long after their suffering has ended, the object will endure.

Some of Ozu's objects, obviously, will not endure in any strict sense, for a shop sign can be changed, a pile of petrol drums be dispersed or pulped. But each of his establishing shots (every shot, in fact) is composed with minute care, so that even a row of factory chimneys, or a corridor empty except for a tin of polish, has, in its immobility and beauty, the essential timelessness of a work of art. And love of beauty, in the Japanese, amounts to reverence, comparable to their deeply-rooted reverence for nature, which finds expression in such passionately observed activities as flower arrangement, or changing scroll paintings on walls to harmonise with the changing seasons, and which is probably a tradition surviving, in a very traditional people, from the pre-Buddhist animistic religion of Japan. It is this which lends to certain of Ozu's exterior scenes a reverberation far beyond the natural beauty of the photography or the grace of movement of his actors: the scene in *Early Autumn* when the two women kneel by the lake, for instance, or in *An Autumn Afternoon*, the oddly moving little scene when the daughter and the boy she loves lean against the fence on the railway platform as they wait for a train.

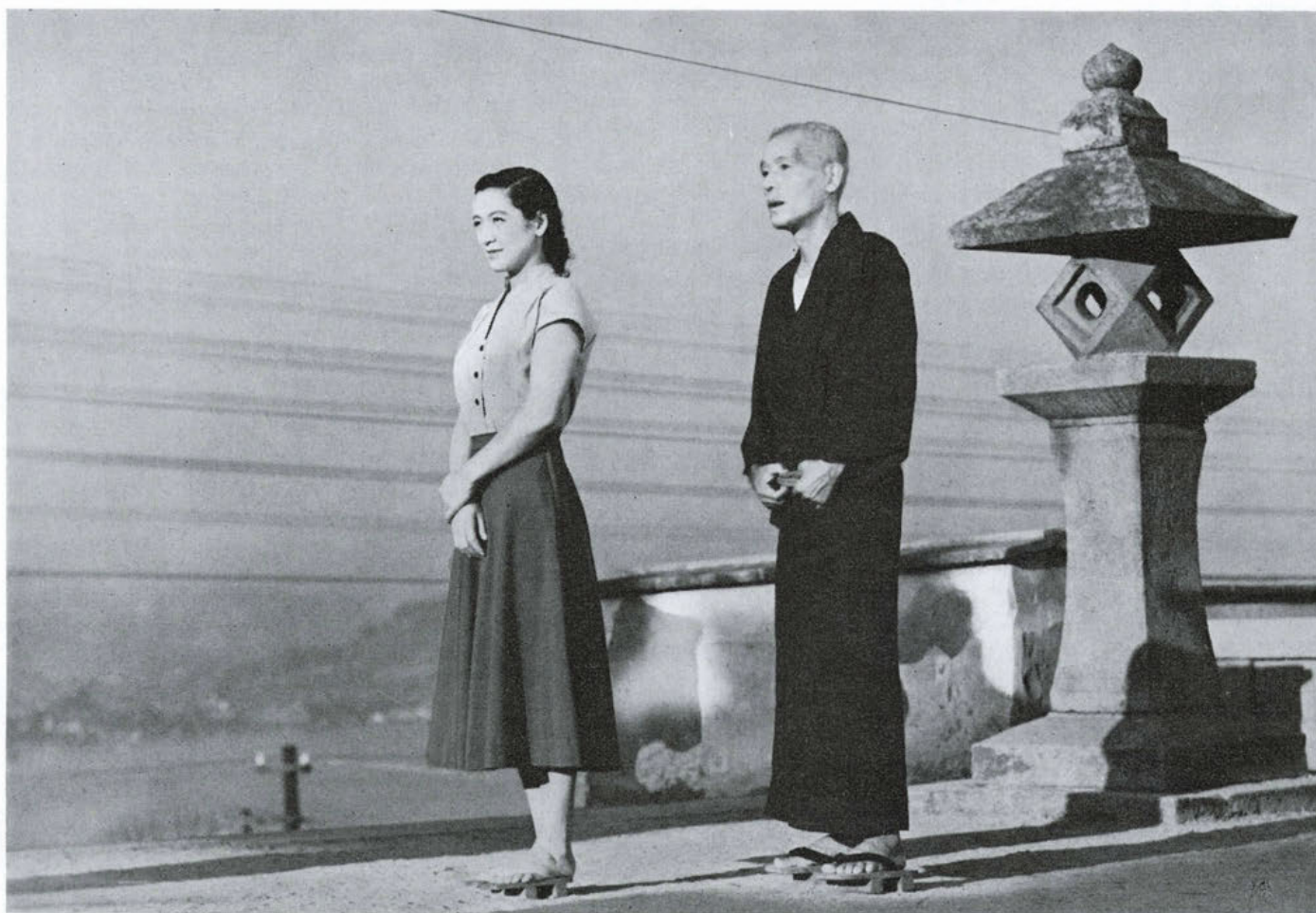
Another useful pointer to Ozu's work is the *haiku*. The *haiku*, as every good Zen Buddhist knows, is a strict poetic form composed of three lines, the first containing five syllables, the second seven, and the last, five again. For example, a *haiku* by the 17th century poet, Bashō:

<i>Furuike ya</i>	<i>An old pool</i>
<i>Kawazu tobikomu</i>	<i>A frog jumps in</i>
<i>Mizu no oto</i>	<i>The sound of water</i>

Professor Ernst analyses the poem as follows: "A crude expansion of the immediate images of this *haiku* is that the old pool signifies permanence or perhaps the continuity of time, while the frog jumping into the pool implies the brief duration of life. The surface of the water is broken, the concentric ripples agitate it, but soon the motion dies. The brief movement of life has disappeared into the eternal unchanging. Even this general description of the 'meaning' of the poem is a falsification, for its poetic effect lies not in a precise intellectual concept but in a terse statement of sensuous images, producing a sense of the fragmentary and the isolated."

"Good Morning".





Father and daughter-in-law: the last sequence of "Tokyo Story".

The application to Ozu's work is obvious, both in the relationship between establishing shot and subsequent scene, and in the relationship between the scenes themselves, which, like the images of the *haiku*, combine to create an interlinear meaning. At the same time, though, the *haiku* illustrates another facet of Japanese art which is particularly relevant to Ozu's method of *mise en scène*. To quote Professor Ernst again:

Although the Japanese schools of Buddhism show wide variations in theory, all are in general agreement about the nature of existence. Existence consists in the interplay of a plurality of elements whose true nature is indescribable and whose source is unknown. Combinations of these elements instantaneously flash into existence and instantaneously disappear, to be succeeded by new combinations of elements appearing in a strict causality. . . . Time is an empty concept invented by the mind; the past has no existence because it has ceased to be, the future is unreal because it does not yet exist. The only concrete reality is the moment . . . Japanese art tends always, as it does in the *haiku*, toward the isolation of the single, significant, visual moment . . .

In *An Autumn Afternoon*, for instance, there is a breathtakingly beautiful moment which, in the context of a European film, might well be a cliché of virtuosity. The daughter has just been told that she cannot marry the man she loves; her father knows that she is upset, and goes to her room to beg her at least to meet the substitute, emphasising that she need not marry him if she dislikes him. Silently she nods agreement. Instead of photographing the two actors within a single frame as he often does, Ozu cuts from one to the other: the father standing, calm, kind, but imperturbably insistent; the daughter seen first from behind, then in front, inscrutably toying with a tape-measure as she agrees to meet the man.

As the father leaves, a final shot observes the girl from behind, and after a moment she slowly raises a hand to tuck a stray lock of hair into place. The gesture, surely a "significant visual moment," vividly captures the girl's grief and helpless isolation. More particularly, however, it is worth noting that because there is no dissolve or fade, there is no tapering or artificial prolongation of the emotion: it is complete in itself. Moreover, because there is no pan from one character to the other, the shot of each of them retains its purity: energy (i.e. emotional content) is not drained from one to feed the other. And the cut comes at the very last moment, with Ozu holding the shot of the father until one feels that he *must* cut to the girl; a dynamic relationship is thus created between the shots which allows the emotional content of each to remain quite separate, held suspended as it were, shot against shot, scene against scene, awaiting their place in the pattern of the whole.

* * *

Essentially, these techniques and this method of construction are at the basis of all Ozu's films, sometimes more and sometimes less successfully used, and obviously refined through the years to the present diamond-sharp precision (in particular, his use of establishing shots seems to have developed recently to an even greater formality). Ozu himself has said that he used dissolves only once, in the 1930 *Life of an Office Worker* (*Kaishain Seikatsu*), and that by 1932, with *I Was Born, But . . .* (*Umarete Wa Mita Keredo*), he had deliberately given up the use of the fade-in and fade-out. Certainly in this early but astonishingly fine film—a brother in minor key to Donskoi's Gorki trilogy—his technique is basically very much what it is today. The main difference is

that *I Was Born, But . . .* is clearly a young man's film, and works in a slightly different way: it is *active* rather than contemplative. Compositionally, it rarely achieves the exquisite simplicity of the later films. One sequence, for instance, opens with a shot of the father taking the early morning air and exercising with chest expanders. He stands in the garden, framed by lines of washing hung up to dry; to the left, and in the background, the garden fence; behind the rear fence, a road; and behind the road, a railway line with a train passing. From the point of view of the later Ozu, this shot can be faulted on two grounds. Firstly, that it contains too complex a pattern of movement—the man using the chest expanders, the washing flapping, the train passing; and secondly, that it is too complex lineally—the two fences, the washing lines, the road, the railway track.

The scene, in fact, is active rather than passive, and the whole film follows suit. There is, comparatively speaking, a good deal of camera tracking, but more striking is Ozu's use of dynamic cutting (almost, shock cutting used for comic purposes). For instance, after the father has discovered that his sons have been playing truant, there is a sequence in which he escorts them to the school gates before departing for his own office; the boys peer in at the gates, see the bully waiting for them, and turn to run away. Ozu cuts sharply to reveal the father still standing and watching sternly, then cuts equally sharply back to the boys as they meekly wheel about and return to the school. This editing technique is used throughout the film, and lends it a rhythm which is unique in his work.

Twenty-seven years later, Ozu remade, or rather re-worked, the theme of *I Was Born, But . . .* in the 1959 *Good Morning* (*Ohayo*). Comparison between the two films is particularly interesting, as the later one reveals a distinct change of emphasis. *I Was Born, But . . .* concentrates almost entirely on the two boys, their pains and joys as they discover society and the difficulties it presents. As with the Gorki films, we feel by the end that we have shared a difficult experience with the children, who are trying to understand why their father should have to bow obsequiously to his boss, while they rule the boss's son with a hand of iron; and the last sequence, when they solve their problem by admitting to the rich child that his father is better than theirs, while forcing him to admit that *they* are better than *he* is, is a charming and brilliantly perceptive insight into the growth of childish

experience. The only characters of any importance in the film, apart from the boys and their schoolfellows, are the mother and father, and the boss.

In *Good Morning* the emphasis shifts from the boys to society in general. A whole host of characters is introduced—more parents, neighbours, a very ancient grandmother, a pedlar, a teacher—as well as certain episodes which have nothing to do with the boys at all (a good deal of catty speculation, for instance, caused by the disappearance of some Women's Club funds). The central situation still remains the same: in *I Was Born, But . . .* the boys rebel against their parents with a hunger strike because they cannot see why their father should kow-tow to anybody; in *Good Morning*, they rebel with a silence strike because they cannot see why they shouldn't have a television set like everybody else. But in *Good Morning* Ozu's concern is mainly satirical, and he uses the silence strike to spark off a series of malicious sketches about "keeping up with the Joneses" and the backbiting of neighbours who feel sure the parents have instructed the boys not to speak to them for snob reasons. Here Ozu is so little interested in his original and central theme that the boys' problems, as well as everybody else's, are solved all too simply and impermanently when their parents are finally driven to buy a television set. *Good Morning* is extremely funny (perhaps Ozu's funniest film), and often brilliantly sharp in its satire, but it has no real centre.

Failure of a more serious kind is illustrated by *Early Spring* (*Soshun*), made in 1956 and the only really unsatisfactory Ozu film I have seen. Alan Lovell has already pointed out the similarity between Ozu and Jane Austen, and although the comparison cannot be taken very far, it is a useful one. Like Jane Austen, Ozu usually keeps to his "little bit of ivory": when he strayed from it in 1950 at his producers' request, to introduce a romantic love interest into *The Munakata Sisters*, the result, according to Donald Richie, was one of his few post-war flops. Although *Early Spring* appears to be highly regarded in Japan, it seems to me to stray, heavily and uninspiringly.

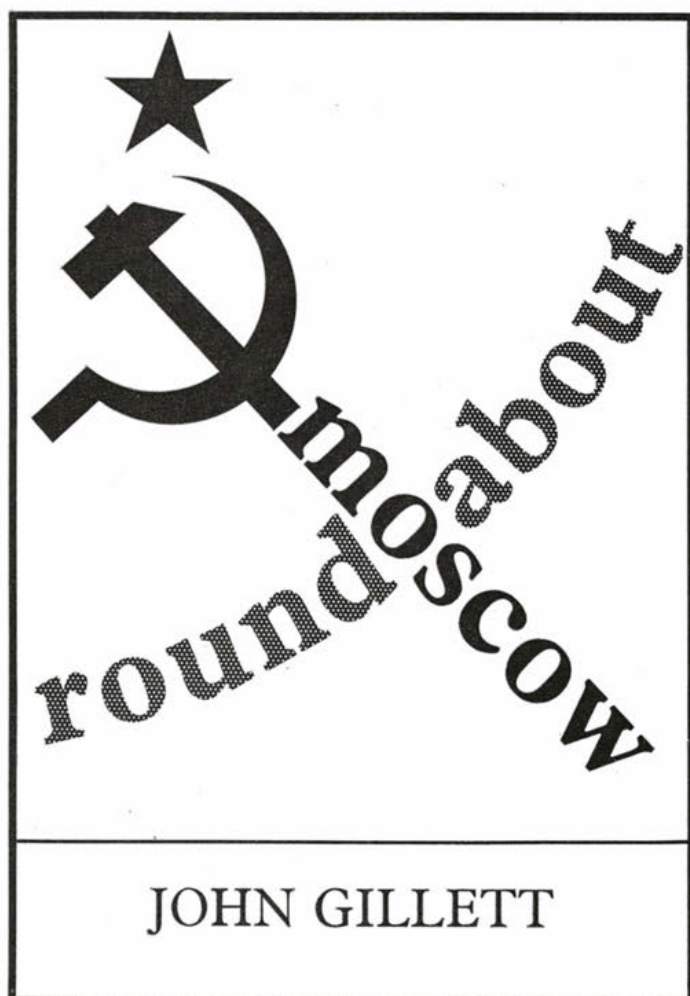
The subject, slightly unusual for Ozu, deals with a married man, bored with his wife, who embarks on an unsatisfactory affair with a free-and-easy girl; disillusioned with her, he accepts a transfer to a provincial branch of his firm; there, away from the bustle of Tokyo, he ponders his life, and is eventually reconciled to a forgiving wife. The first image of the film is one of emptiness and boredom, as the husband and wife get up in the morning to start their day; and Ozu—probably because the lasting communion of marriage is to him self-evident—never bothers to *demonstrate* the value of their marriage. Consequently the final reconciliation, shot in characteristically exquisite style, seems completely arbitrary. Several other episodes which contribute to the husband's spiritual odyssey add their rather melodramatic weight to the feeling that the film is overloaded on a very slender base: the scene, reminiscent of some tormented Russian play, when he visits a young office friend who is dying, for instance; or when another friend talks despairingly to him about abortion because his wife is having a baby which he cannot afford.

Late Spring (*Banshun*, 1949) and *Late Autumn* (*Akibiyori*, 1961) again offer a useful contrast. *Late Spring* has a very similar theme to *An Autumn Afternoon*—a father's decision to marry off his only daughter—and is one of Ozu's most beautiful films. *Late Autumn* is a remake, considerably changed, in terms of a mother and daughter, and much less successful. As with *Good Morning*, many of the characters seem arbitrarily introduced merely to make a good scene: for example, the daughter's pert young office colleague who

Continued on page 206



"Late Autumn".



MOSCOW IN JULY... an oppressive heat haze hangs over the city: inside the Hotel Moskva dozens of stars, directors and delegates to the film festival mingle and gabble in the sweltering foyer, whilst outside a crowd of cheerful teenagers keeps a permanent vigil for famous faces and, in nearby Red Square, a small army of mounted film extras rides obediently round a small set for *War and Peace*, kicking up clouds of dust in the afternoon sun.

So a little film oasis was established in the centre of Moscow for two busy and instructive weeks, with the Palace of Congresses in the Kremlin itself as the centre of operations. As one approached this huge shiny building, via a cobbled pathway and some imposing arches, it looked like something from *Things to Come*, especially when contrasted with the older Kremlin landmarks: glass walls, a weird array of escalators running from ground to ceiling, and television sets in the vast foyer which relayed the films as they were shown. Inside, one found an all-purpose auditorium seating about 6,000, complete with deep stage, hidden orchestra pit and facilities for earphone translations in more than a dozen languages. Upstairs, a ballroom-cum-refreshment centre catered for the mainly youthful crowds who stared, persistently but kindly, at the hundreds of foreigners in their midst. First impressions, then: this was a festival of crowds and big occasions and lengthy welcoming speeches and enquiring faces anxious to seek your opinions on art, politics and life in general. There's no doubt about it: the Russians like to be liked.

More crowds again on the few non-film evenings: at the Gorki Park where a lengthy open-air entertainment was given by many of the visiting delegations—a kind of Amateur Night

with the stars, with Peter Ustinov rousing a startled audience with his impersonation of a German music teacher, and Italian songs from Lea Massari (guitar) and Georgia Moll (bongos) which ended abruptly and sadly when the former lost her plectrum. Gradually these public events also became opportunities to seek out elusive personalities. At a grandiose reception within the Kremlin itself, with its little ante-rooms looking like sets from *Ivan the Terrible*, a gallery band interspersed the inevitable speeches with Frenchified military marches as the hundreds of guests munched their way along the buffet tables. And here, suddenly, one met the Soviet cinema face to face, in the persons of Arnstam talking about the Bach score he once arranged for a performance of *Potemkin*, Alexandrov describing his new version of *October* incorporating material cut in the Twenties, Roshal and Ermler reminiscing a little wistfully over their early triumphs, and Gerasimov huddled out of earshot in a corner with a black-coated group eating ice-cream. Finally, and best of all, Mark Donskoi, bubbling over and gesticulating as he sent eager greetings to his English friends.

* * *

For the Muscovites, however, this was primarily a festival of films rather than personalities, although every delegation was given polite applause as they made their obligatory, formularised speeches of goodwill before entering the ceremonial box in the Palace. All performances, both in and out of competition, were sold out, with a total audience of around 600,000, surely a record for any film festival. In the circumstances, it was regrettable that the quality of the entries was so low, since the festival provides the Muscovites with their only opportunity to see a cross-section of world cinema. The Americans, with an unusually amiable delegation including George Stevens Jnr, Tony Curtis and Stanley Kramer, showed *Some Like It Hot*, *The Great Escape*, *West Side Story* and *Judgment at Nuremberg*, all of which were eagerly gulped down by the Russians. The Wilder film, in particular, reduced the audience to near hysterics.

Other countries seemed unwilling to take chances, and we saw an indigestible selection of what may be termed "Moscow subjects": wartime resistance dramas, heroic sagas from countries recently released from the "colonial yoke" (to use a choice phrase delivered from the stage), and records of workers' resistance to capitalist oppression (both the Polish and Rumanian entries dealt with miners' strikes). Seemingly, the pattern has not changed much over the years. East European directors still possess the talent and resources to deploy huge masses across the wide screen, yet the approach to characterisation and dramatic construction remains, for the most part, wholly doctrinaire, and contemporary subjects were as usual in the minority. But if the formulas on the screen tended to look stale after a few days, the after-screening discussions grew in intensity. Unlike their Western counterparts, the Russians never tire of airing their artistic problems.

In many respects, this has been a crucial year for Soviet political and artistic policies. The beginning of the Moscow Festival coincided with the climax of the Russo-Chinese clash (the Chinese, in fact, withdrew all their films at the outset), and the Test Ban agreement was initialled at the festival's end. Also in the air were rumours that Mr. Khrushchev's famous March speech on the need to maintain party surveillance over the arts (reported in the last *SIGHT AND SOUND*)* would result in increased caution, especially on the part of the younger filmmakers.

Accordingly, the two morning discussions presided over by Gerasimov—whose writings on socialist realism represent the ultimate in conformity—promised to be rich in polemics. But after a lengthy introduction by an unsmiling Gerasimov, who

*When several of us asked if it was possible to see the film in question, *Ilyich Zastava*, we were told politely that it was being re-cut.



Soviet bravura: Tarkovsky's "Childhood of Ivan".

reiterated all the familiar dogmas and then took to smoking in a rather agitated manner, the discussion degenerated into over-generalised harangue. Too many speakers simply repeated the dictum that the cinema should be for humanity and not against it, without stating with any precision just what they meant. Others made it clear that they deemed "entertainment" to be a dirty word; a leading Soviet critic delivered a diatribe against the "depravity of the Western" (poor old Ford); whilst Antonioni, Resnais and the practitioners of *cinéma-vérité* emerged as the modern villains. In an attempt to gain clarification on some of these points, I jokingly asked a group of Eastern delegates why Antonioni should not be allowed to co-exist with, say, De Santis, that arch-priest of commercial left-wing "realism". Depressingly, they replied that, although they had seen nothing by Antonioni, they felt his work represented the decadent side of his society and should not be encouraged. . . .

Coming shortly after these debates, the three or four new Soviet films shown during the festival were eagerly scanned for clues on current thinking, but they produced only minor surprises. *Running Empty*, a Lenfilm production directed by Vladimir Vengerov, contained some outspoken remarks on bureaucratic crassness (eagerly applauded by the audience) and a gripping middle section concerning two men and a lorry stuck in a wasteland of snow. The framing story, however, was fairly trite. *3 + 2*, a comedy about three men and two girls who meet on holiday, had a defiantly modern sheen with snazzy camerawork, American-style editing and a light, bantering tone; quite pleasant, in fact, until it started to force the charm and the jokes a little too hard. Most enjoyable of those I saw was *Iliko, Illarion, Grandmother and Me* by the Georgian director, Abouladze: virtually a series of comic, lyrical and grotesque village sketches shot mainly out of doors, it avoided the faded, studio-bound look of so much current Soviet production and had a few genuine visual ideas as well. Yet there was something a bit predictable about its treatment of the young people; and the set pieces, like the scene of the villagers leaving for the war, seemed to come out of the textbook rather than from any personal compulsion.

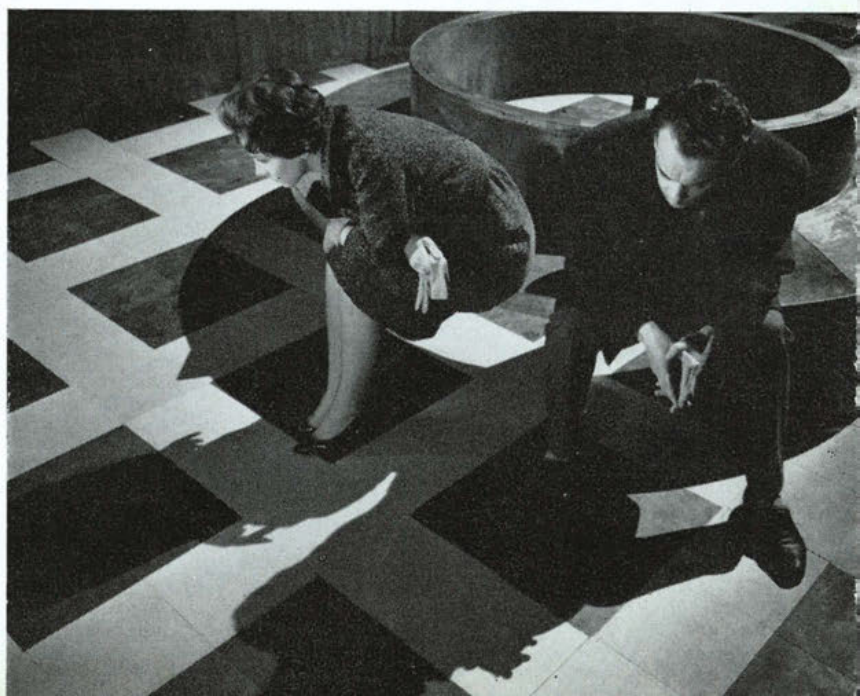
Soviet realism: Mikhail Romm's "Nine Days of One Year", with Alexei Batalov as a victim of radiation sickness.

Towards the end of the festival, when everyone was showing signs of celluloid weariness, our hosts eagerly prophesied that Fellini night would provide the ultimate excitement. Moscow audiences seem to warm to a good controversial evening out, but the scene in and around the Palace of Congresses on the night of *Eight and a Half* exceeded all expectations. By the time the performance began, the theatre was jam-packed, with nearly a hundred people squashed in the aisles upstairs, while a huge crowd outside pleaded for tickets. Fellini himself received a tremendous acclamation, even after he had given a somewhat laboured "explanation" of the film as if to anticipate possible criticisms of obscurity; and for about half its running time, I felt, the audience was sympathetically engrossed. At the end, when Mastroianni shakes off his introspection and joins the crowd, the applause was considerable if not fervent. But some grim expressions and shaking of heads in the foyer afterwards gave an indication of the storm that was to come. After sixteen hours of debate and much bitter arguing between the eight Eastern jurors and the seven from the West and Asia (including Stanley Kramer, Satyajit Ray and Jean Marais), the latter won the day and the film was awarded the Grand Prix. Perhaps in an effort to soften the blow, almost every other major film entered received a prize, sometimes for very dubious reasons.

Reactions were immediate and conflicting. An elderly lady interpreter at the British table in the Moskva answered my request for an opinion on the Fellini with "very interesting, of course, but it is the kind of film we try *not* to make." Later in the Press Club, a young Soviet journalist told me how much the award would mean to those younger film-makers who were trying to break away from old formulas. I felt a little uncomfortable when I had to tell him that, despite brilliant flashes, much of the film for me was tired and vulgar and that the best Fellini was to be found in his earlier work (which he had not seen, of course). Shortly after the festival ended, the official Soviet press came down heavily against the film, for more orthodox reasons. "Vagueness and morbidity" were the keywords. Alexandrov, among others, argued that the award was wrong, adding that anyone who thought that Soviet film-makers "unconditionally recognised this film and accepted its philosophy was not only naive but deliberately unobjective." Another spokesman expressed the hope that "Federico Fellini, a great artist, will overcome this dejection and create works which will inspire the spectator with courage and determination, instead of plunging him into despair and despondency."

* * *

Will this controversial prize, coming only a few months after Khrushchev's speech, have any lasting effect on Soviet



film policy and the thinking of both creators and audiences? In order to answer this question, I shall have to make some generalisations of my own based on what I was able to learn during these two weeks. One thing is certain: Soviet film-makers of all generations are united in their desire to make films which are "useful" both to the community and the philosophy they serve. But, usually, they find it easier to describe what they are against in other people's work than to specify what they want to do in their own. When they castigate the worst kind of commercialism from the West and America, many Western critics can find areas of agreement, although we also know the good, likeable Hollywood tradition which exists alongside the bad. Believing, as they do, that Hollywood once represented the ultimate in capitalist manipulation of the people's will, they immediately acclaim a film like *On the Beach* as a major exception, a truly progressive work for peace, without regard to all its tortuous banalities. Conversely, though many film people may have been excited by the method and photography and flights of fancy of *Eight and a Half*, they might also partially agree with the official critics' views that the hero's confused musings were not expressed in a meaningful or constructive way. If one suggested that other directors, such as Bresson, have managed to create introspective heroes of greater significance, no comparison would be possible because they haven't seen the films.

And here one arrives at the great stumbling block in all our discussions. Since there are no specialised cinemas in Russia as we know them, many major film talents like Renoir, Antonioni, Buñuel, Ray and Mizoguchi are almost completely unknown to the interested public, though there may be a few private screenings for lucky film people. This is doubly regrettable, as several of these artists could be said to have something in common with Soviet thinking. Difficulties in trade agreements and bureaucratic procrastination are contributing factors, as well as the fact that films bought for home consumption must be deemed suitable for a mass audience—Ray's *Apu* trilogy, for example, was regretfully turned down for this reason. Accordingly, Donskoi, a kindred spirit if ever there was one, told me that he had seen only one Ray film: *Jalsaghar*, shown at the 1959 Moscow Festival.

* * *

The fact that the Soviet public and film-makers have only a scanty knowledge of world cinema may help to explain why audiences seem fairly content to accept the second-rate, and also why they do not react very happily to ambiguities in directorial styles and methods. I got the impression that they respond to clear-cut statements on the screen without feeling the need to judge either motivation or questions of artistic taste. As at Cannes and Venice, bravura patches are quickly recognised, though the greatest applause was reserved for simple moral victories, as in the Japanese film *Spoiled Girl*, when the young hero plasters the bad boy all over a bar in a particularly vicious fight, or the Yugoslav *Kozara*, when the partisans perform all kinds of entirely unrealistic feats of daring. In other words, if our audiences languidly accept the violence, greed and corruption to be found in the Western cinema, the Russians are no less ready to accept a cinema of naive and calculated social gestures.

The critical climate does little to help this situation. Most of what I heard or read in the festival's official publications was infinitely depressing, being couched in a thick and puddingy jargon which uses a great many words to say practically nothing. Along with all the verbiage and the rule-of-thumb moral judgments, Russian critics are extremely painstaking in working out the social implications contained in everything they see. Occasionally, as in the analysis of Britain's rather unhappy official entry, *Sammy Going South*, one felt a sledgehammer was being taken to crack a nut; and it was disconcerting for Sandy Mackendrick to find that, in the light of Moscow, his adventure story emerged as a kind of racist



Infant colonialist: a scene from "Sammy Going South".

tract. The critic of *Moskovskaya Pravda* regretted that, at the end, "this charming boy is invested, by the will of the authors, with the moral traits of a cynical, militant colonialist."

One might have been less unresponsive to these somewhat extravagant judgments if the same critics had dealt equally toughly with the more banal Eastern entries, with their contrivances and naïvetés. But Soviet audiences receive few tips from their critics on questions of style or individual talent (admittedly, the situation is not that much better here). This may explain why so much contemporary Soviet cinema looks drably old-fashioned, or else knocks your eye out with dollops of "style" which are either derivative or put in because they are considered fashionable.

This lack of a general perspective and a really lively critical climate unclouded by dogmas and persistent theorising may also explain why a film like Tarkovsky's *Childhood of Ivan*, with its defiantly humanist message and ugly bravura fireworks, is thought more worthy of discussion than, say, Heifits' *Lady with the Little Dog*, whose calm, precise shooting style has affinities, albeit indirectly, with the confident, undemonstrative yet truly filmic tradition of Ford and Renoir.

In all these discussions with Soviet colleagues, I failed almost entirely to find agreement on the proposition that there is more than one kind of artistic activity. (I received a surprised look when I told someone that I loved M-G-M musicals as well as Eisenstein and Dovzhenko.) These doubts and misunderstandings are not likely to be erased until the Russians are able to assess both their own glorious past and the rest of the world's as well. One last example: during a visit to the excellent State Film Archives, we ran a print of *Ivan the Terrible, Part II* which was far superior to anything seen in the West, and my young interpreter was completely overwhelmed by her first experience of the film. Everywhere, in fact, one could sense a desire among critics and film-makers alike to break out and discover new paths, and somehow to do so without forgetting the ideals to which their cinema and society are committed. Despite its negative virtues, if the Fellini award really does excite and promote some kind of aesthetic reevaluation, it may after all have proved an ironically positive decision.

CL FILM PS



I AM NEVER QUITE SURE how I feel about Leopoldo Torre Nilsson's films. I tend to enjoy most of them, but a little shamefacedly, rather because, I have always suspected, they give the impression that the director himself enjoys them, but a little shamefacedly. There is always something a little too *youlu* about their wildest extravagances for one either to accept them with total frivolity, as one would those of *Mildred Pierce*, or to be stampeded into submission by sheer force of personal obsession, as one is in Buñuel's best, most way-out films. In the circumstances it was inevitable, when I finally ran Mr. Torre Nilsson to earth where he was hiding in darkest Belgravia to work on the script of a forthcoming and (he hopes) British film, that I should sooner or later edge him round to this vexed question of his cinematic baroque, the delight of some, complete anathema to others.

He smiled rather enigmatically behind the invariable dark glasses (he was apparently pursued round Berlin this year by cries of "Doctor Mabuse!" from passers-by). "My baroque bits? It's a peculiar thing, but I notice looking back that my films are intricate and elaborate in style in an inverse ratio to the degree of confidence I had in the story and characters at the time. It seems to me that if I really believe in the people and what they are doing, then I make the film very simply and directly, without effects. But as soon as I begin to have doubts I start to elaborate, as a sort of compensation I suppose, an insurance against boredom and disbelief. All this is quite unconscious while I am working, but in retrospect I can chart my involvement with my subjects very accurately by the elaboration of my style. *La Casa del Angel*, for instance, is very baroque, very elaborate, and then *El Sequestrador* hardly at all. *La Caida* again has a lot of effects, and then *Fin de Fiesta* hardly any. *La Mano en la Trampa* is a real showcase of extravagances, but *Piel de Verano*, which I was working on immediately afterwards, is the simplest, purest and most direct of all my films, perhaps because it is the one which has been closest and most real to me in its subject matter."

Did this mean, I wondered, that it was his favourite film? "I don't know. Perhaps it is the one I like best as a whole, but I feel too close to it to judge it properly." And *El Sequestrador*? I pursued, since it remains one of my own favourites. "Ah, that's more difficult. You see it was the only film I made under the impression that I was a genius, and my most complete fiasco. I came back from Europe, where everybody seemed to be saying that *La Casa del Angel* was marvellous, and it had won prizes, and I suppose I was a bit swollen-headed. Anyway, I set out to make *El Sequestrador* just to please myself, without any consideration of my audience, and when it was finished everyone, without exception, hated it. It didn't win any prizes, it didn't make any money, it didn't even rate a few kind words. Well, it was a good lesson; it gave me back a sense of proportion . . . I haven't seen the film for years, though I have the impression there are good things in it. The patient made a good recovery, but it's best to let the wound heal completely before you remove the dressing."

If *El Sequestrador* had been a box-office disaster, how had his other films fared in the home market? Could they hope to recover their cost in Argentina alone? "They can, yes, and sometimes they do. By British or American standards they are very cheap—about £20,000 each, I should say, and that is not so much to get back. The trouble is that there is little popular audience for native films; most of the mass audience goes mainly to dubbed American films. An Argentine film has to appeal to the same limited audience that goes to an Antonioni or a Bergman film, and so it tends to be sold largely on snob appeal. I think that only a small minority—perhaps about 20,000—really understand at all or like what I am trying to do. Still, back in the days when I was struggling to write avant-garde verse, the idea of reaching an audience of even 20,000 would have seemed an extravagant and impossible dream."

We talked of his close and almost unbroken collaboration with his wife, the novelist Beatriz Guido (the only film he has made without her in the last ten, *Un Guapo del '900*, he regards as a straight commercial chore). I spoke of the extraordinary correspondence of effect between the films and the published stories on which they were based, even though detailed comparison shows that the adaptation is usually very free. "Do you find that? Certainly the film is frequently not an adaptation, properly speaking, but an independent work derived from the same sources and materials as the story. Of course I am often deeply involved in Beatriz's writing from the earliest stages, and I frequently start working out the film treatment in my mind while she is writing the story, so that afterwards neither of us can quite remember what comes in the book and what in the film. Sometimes a long script may come from the same impulse as a very short story, as in the case of this new script, *A Beautiful Family*, and at others, as with *Fin de Fiesta*, the film may cover only part of a very long novel. I like this new story very much, it is very delicate and simple. Perhaps it is unusual for the British cinema [which, seeing that it treats of an all-male triangle, is putting it mildly] but I hope we shall be able to do it here. Of course raising finance here is all so complicated: at home all I need do is take out another mortgage on my house . . ."

* * *

YOU CAN HARDLY ASK an actress why she has appeared in so many bad films and so few good ones. At least, you can't ask most actresses, but Patricia Neal is the exception that proves the rule. Indeed, she is there almost before you are. "Of all the films I have made, there are perhaps five of which I'm not ashamed," she says cheerfully, and then starts numbering them, only to conclude that in fact there may be no more than four. They are *Hud*, *A Face in the Crowd*, *The Breaking Point* and, rather surprisingly, *Three Secrets*, an early Robert Wise film which she says was basically just a soap-opera but unusually well done. Add to these *Breakfast at Tiffany's*, a good film that she didn't like herself in, and *The Fountainhead*, a

mad film which she recalls with ironic detachment as her none too fortunate 'big break' in pictures, and you get a meagre enough harvest for fifteen years in the cinema—for anyone's fifteen years in the cinema, but particularly for an actress of the calibre of Patricia Neal.

Of course she has done other things as well: no one who saw her in *Suddenly Last Summer* on the stage is likely even to remember what Elizabeth Taylor was like in the film, and glowing reports of her appearances on the American stage have filtered over. But in the cinema for years she seemed to appear only in nonsense like *The Day the Earth Stood Still*, *Weekend with Father* and *Something for the Birds*; so it was hardly surprising, if after all a little disappointing, that so many seem first to have woken to her talents in *Hud*, generally with cries of 'But where has she been all our lives?' The answer is that as far as British critics are concerned she has been right under our noses, living quietly in the home counties with her writer husband Roald Dahl. You would never know it, of course, because *Psyche 59*, which she was in the middle of shooting when I met her, is the first British-made film she has appeared in since *The Hasty Heart*. Why? "Because nobody has offered me a part before; they just say there aren't that many parts for American women in British films, and that's that." Nevertheless she is playing an Englishwoman quite happily in *Psyche*, the accent she is called on to assume being merely a straightforward standard English. ("I think I can manage that after living here for so long. It was when I was asked to test for *This Sporting Life* and worked for a couple of weeks with a woman who lives in my village to acquire the necessary Northern accent that I really realised my limitations!")

As for her Hollywood career, she is philosophical. "I think it matters an awful lot where you start. If you begin with a big part in which you are perfectly cast and the film makes a lot of money, you can ride along for about ten years on the result. But if you start wrong, your career may never go right again. *The Fountainhead* was my big break (I'd only been in something terrible called *John Loves Mary* before), and I was very young, and very obsessed with the idea of becoming a great actress. I had a constant battle to manage the part, and it was mostly a solitary battle, because King Vidor, whom I love dearly, is one of the old-style Hollywood directors who don't really expect to have to help actors. All he'd do when I had problems was say 'Come on, baby, give it all you've got,' when really I was seriously wondering if I'd got anything to give in the first place. And so I started out on the wrong foot, and spent the next ten years trying to sort out my career. I'm not sorry I made the films I did; anyway I didn't have much choice. You can't act except by acting, and you can't stay in pictures except by staying in pictures . . ."

Patricia Neal's favourite among all the films she has made is, understandably enough, *Hud*. With her stage background she is naturally most at home working with directors like Ritt and Kazan who have been actors and work well with them. *Hud* in particular seems to have been a happy communal effort: "I think practically everyone on that film had worked before with some of the others, and since Martin Ritt and the Ravetches were all co-producers they had final say in how it was made. We just sat round reading the script for two weeks before we began shooting—rehearsing, we called it—and really worked ourselves into it. And not only the actors benefited; doing this we found one or two serious flaws in the original script in plenty of time for the writers to put them right, instead of no one noticing till the rough-cut, which is what usually happens. Just imagine, the scene where Paul Newman sees me off at the bus station originally ended with a great passionate kiss. I grumbled and grumbled about it, and finally persuaded Martin that he would shoot it both ways, with and without; then as we got further and further into the thing everybody just realised that the kiss was wrong, and in the end it was shot only the one way."



Graciela Borges in a scene from Leopoldo Torre Nilsson's "*Piel de Verano*", shown here as "*Summer Skin*".

We are deep in a discussion of the essential difference between Monica Vitti and Jeanne Moreau as screen stars when it is time for Miss Neal to go back on set. She puts on decorative dark glasses (in the film, a nicely nasty-sounding psychological drama, she plays a woman who remains psychosomatically blind after an accident). "You know, last week for the first time in my life I seriously began to pray that I might be fired from a role! I suppose it's rather late in my acting career for me to understand that on the screen you act with your eyes, but then I'm always learning something in this business!"

* * *

THE MAN RESPONSIBLE FOR *Psyche 59* is Alexander Singer, director of *Cold Wind in August*. He is one of the most practical-minded and totally disarming of the latest generation of American directors. Not for him any cloudy talk about Art and the higher destiny of the film as a creative medium; he strikes one as exactly what he is, a mad film-fan who loves making films and delights unselfconsciously in the whole craft side of the undertaking. I told him how much I enjoyed *Cold Wind in August* as an exercise in telling an interesting story interestingly and unpretentiously, and he seemed pleased. "The prime object was to take a story that interested us and a good but inexpensive cast, and make for 120,000 dollars a film that looked as if it had cost 300,000. I wanted to work in Hollywood, and this seemed the best way to do it. You see, what Hollywood demands above all is a certain standard of technical competence; and technical competence, moreover, in a particular style. If you shoot like Jean-Luc Godard, however brilliantly you do it, you're dead as far as Hollywood is concerned. So *Cold Wind* was deliberately shot in a fairly conventional style, modified as far as I felt it could be by what I personally would like to do if left entirely to myself. There are perhaps four or five shots in the film which I really like very much. But on the whole I'm pleased with the result: as a compromise it seems to me a fair compromise."

Actually, if any new American director is qualified to shoot like Godard if he wanted to, it is probably Alexander Singer. He was at school with Stanley Kubrick and like Kubrick began



Patricia Neal, Samantha Eggar and Curt Jurgens in "Psyche 59".

as a magazine photographer ("He got further faster than I did, but then he was so much better than I was") and made his real beginning in the cinema with a forces film unit during his national service. Here he had ample experience photographing, directing and editing reportage films, and became a specialist with a hand-held camera. Back in civilian life he hung around film-making in New York, working 'under the counter' as assistant director and cameraman whenever some expertise with a hand-held camera was required, and also photographing a number of non-commercial films, among them a document-



ary about the painter Dong Kingman directed by James Wong Howe. Finally he managed to get into the union as an assistant director and worked in this capacity on Kubrick's *The Killing*, as well as handling some of the actuality racetrack footage after all attempts to get it by normal Hollywood means with an eighteen-man crew had failed. There followed some television work, *Cold Wind in August*, and now a three-film deal with Columbia, *Psyche 59* being the first. As Singer himself says, "In films talent helps, but in the long run it is persistence that gets you places." Since on present showing he himself has a fair share of both, his future progress should be worth watching.

* * *

WELL, WHAT MORE IS THERE left for anyone to say about *Cleopatra* these days? Not, of course, that that prevents people from saying it anyway, sometimes with quite interesting results. The most entertaining contribution to the inevitable succession of on-the-spot reportages is Walter Wanger's *My Life with Cleopatra* (written with the assistance of Joe Hyams, movie editor of *This Week*; I don't know why, but I find something irresistibly funny about the notion of even a diary appearing as-told-to). *The People* seized eagerly on the juicier bits for serialisation, while *The Observer* embarked three weeks later on a tasteful *rechauffé* of some folly and grandeur bits (without acknowledgment, but even retaining such obvious slips in the original as 'Randal' for Ranald MacDougall).

Despite all this excitement, blown up still further by Spyros K. Skouras's announcement that he was going to sue Wanger for libel, what emerges most forcefully from the book itself is the boring, grinding, unglamorous, endless routine of the job. Not, admittedly, quite the usual sort of film routine, but after a few months of "Liz in hospital with black eye and badly bruised nose," "JLM, ill with temperature and strep throat, must remain in bed two days," "Roddy McDowall unable to work because of a broken tooth," "Burton had been out all night pub-crawling and celebrating . . . We couldn't wake him for his scenes, which caused a delay in shooting," "Rex called for the doctor today. The clinic is thriving" and still, on the last (official) day's shooting, "JLM still ill. Shamroy is having blood-pressure trouble. One of the horses threw a rider, who is hurt," it must have got to seem just as boringly routine as any other film assignment.

The chief oddity which emerged for me from reading the book as a whole is the fantastic succession of writers who were at one time or another used, called in, approached or thought of to work on the script. From a fairly modest beginning with one Ludi Claire, "an actress turned writer," assembling material into a rough script, we run rapidly through Nigel Balchin, Lawrence Durrell (brought in as an expert on Alexandria to give it class), Marc Brandel, Nunnally Johnson and even, in an hysterical moment no doubt, Paddy Chayefsky, who turns in some "very interesting" ideas on the script but has to be discounted because he would want six months to rewrite it. Then there is the big break, and Mankiewicz starts all over again, with the aid first of Sidney Buchman, then again of Lawrence Durrell and then of Randal (i.e., Ranald) MacDougall. But before the end desperate measures are being considered: Paul Osborn, perhaps, or Lillian Hellman, to provide the woman's angle? What the mind really boggles at is the thought of what all these wildly divergent writers in consortium would make of a script, and how anyone could have expected even for a moment to get anything coherent out of their combined operations. Still, who expects a super-epic to be coherent?

ARKADIN

The camera is lined up on Patricia Neal for a shot in "Psyche 59".

FILM REVIEWS

8½

HARASSED FOR SO LONG by his critics, Fellini tried to grow up to them and give a realistically correct account of Roman society. But the critics' theories were all wrong for him, and in spite of moments of local brilliance, he was unable to save *La Dolce Vita* from being a *potage* of botched intentions, aimless in its plot and betraying a gossip column mawkishness in its approach to questions of morality, of sex and religion. A creative compromise, then; and one which I suspect Fellini took cognisance of, for *8½* (Gala) is an answer to his critics and their theories, a refusal to be browbeaten, a firm clearing of the decks.

Fellini's conviction is worth stressing, I think, if only because the opposition have made so much of *Otto e Mezzo*'s inconclusiveness: that it was made at a time when Fellini was tired, for instance, and that he improvised to such an extent that a fortnight before the first showing he was still dithering about the choice of the final sequence. But if we take the film on its own level, these criteria turn turtle. Inconclusiveness appears as creative freedom—a freedom which is so controlled that Nino Rota's music, Piero Gherardi's sets and costumes, and the camerawork of Gianni Di Venanzo (a newcomer to the Fellini team) manage to be stimulating in their own right and yet to merge tactfully into the director's style. Improvisation becomes a form of exploration; and the chosen ending is, in the light of what has gone before, inevitable. In fact, this is the first time Fellini has managed to cram all his material into one plot without bursting it at the seams; perhaps because this is the first occasion on which he has used a formal irony. This irony, I should say, is far from being novel: the theme of the self-reflexive spirit, seeking out the meaning of an art form through the use of that form, goes back to Coleridge and the origins of the Romantic movement. All the same, as Fellini shows, the device is still serviceable.

The film director Guido Anselmi (Marcello Mastroianni, very much on form) is confined to a spa. He is depressed and unable to work on his latest project, and he is surrounded by a group of seemingly hostile figures, including his producer, scriptwriter, wife and mistress. At first these figures irritate him no more than would the scratches on a gramophone record of breathtaking music, for he is haunted by his surroundings: images, memories and ideals return to him, suggestions of some half-realised beauty. These images are usually those of women, young and old—women distorted by two obsessions: his mother, and the church.

In his dreams, his mother and wife are interchangeable, and harem girls bathe him in a childhood tub; while at the spa, his Balbec, the Valkyries drinking holy water are dressed in the extravagant hats and faded costumes of a half forgotten epoch. As for the church—well, this portrait of an artist shows that he too was taught to dread women as a young man. The traumatic experience happened at school, when the priests (wickedly, Fellini has some of them played by old women) chastised him cruelly for lurking about the den of La Saraghina, a monstrous Rouault-like prostitute. Even now, as a grown man, he is chilled when the benign-looking Cardinal answers his plea—how can I find happiness?—by quoting the eunuch Origen—only through the church can truth be found—and offers him the uncompromising choice: *civitas dei* or *civitas diaboli*. Fellini's technique of association by images is seen at its best here: a mention of Caesar leads on to the bath sequence, of Roman faces above towelled togas moving through curlicues of steam—images that suggest Michelangelo's *Inferno* and prepare us for the meeting with the Cardinal. *Civitas diaboli*: and we cut to a fashionable street and the glamour of the spa. Guido has chosen damnation; but rightly so, perhaps, for he does find a sort of happiness in an image of innocence, of a girl called, almost inevitably, Cardinale.

And yet, much as Proust was unable to explain why the taste of

a *petite madeleine* brought him such ecstasy, so Guido is only able to say that he is happy because "everything is as it was . . . I am what I am, and not what I want to be . . ." In the final sequence the magician draws together his images (the inexplicably fascinating faces; the people he can only love when they have become part of himself) into the glittering circus of childhood memory, beneath the useless yet necessary rocket launching pad which cost eight million *lire*. Only then, as he joins the completed circle, can these images shore him up against his ruin and save him and his boyhood self, who plays a piccolo against the increasing darkness. For against the objections of his scriptwriter, who presents *our* objections (it has all the deficiencies of an avant-garde film without any of its merits, it is old-fashioned and its realism is bogus), Guido demonstrates that his type of film must be created through his authentic self, and not through the dictates of theory. "Do you support the Catholics or the Communists?" asks a critic. But of course the question is far too simple. Like a man trapped in his car, he must free himself. His art must include all his past obsessions, all that makes up his present self. The irrational must enter, so that the false web of symbolism, of forced meanings, may be destroyed, and the true and candid images emerge. "Are lies and truth the same to you?" cries his wife, Luisa. To which he might answer, like Brice Parain in *Vivre sa Vie*, that lies and evasions are part of the totality, part of the search for truth.

This response, however, fails to answer Luisa's case fully. Both Guido and Fellini show themselves incapable of making the distinction between the truths of the mind and those of behaviour. The self-reflexive spirit can swiftly turn narcissistic, and although Guido may confront his inner world, he fails to confront his social obligations. Reality and dreams may merge, and yet the distinction between them still holds. Because of this, you can (if you don't like the film) see *Otto e Mezzo* as a monstrous form of self-pleading, an indulgence which coarsens the fantasies by making them seem too easy. In fact I don't think Fellini confronted these fantasies easily, but I do feel that he loves Guido at the expense of his persecutors; and especially, despite a strong performance by Anouk Aimée, at that of poor Luisa. These other figures lack weight, so that when they are at the centre of the screen *Otto e Mezzo* thins out and the mechanism of plot begins to show through. Nonetheless, though he can't face up to the total case, we must be grateful to Fellini for having presented so much of it, and with such flair and exuberance.

ERIC RHODE

BILLY LIAR!

WITH BILLY LIAR! (Warner-Pathé/Anglo Amalgamated), John Schlesinger shows us that it is possible to make a film in this country that has movement, energy, grace and charm, that it is possible to make immense comic use of the remarkable Mr. Courtenay and to exploit an industrial suburban setting for its absurdly local yet characteristic happenings, for its sense of the light-hearted as well as the drab. Like its central character, Billy Fisher (Tom Courtenay), *Billy Liar!* is a film of many moods, a film of an essential ambiguity of feeling. As Billy's mind shifts from reality to Ambrosia—his imaginary country where he always has success—the film shifts with him, changing dreariness to farce. Yet, since Billy does not really know how he feels at any particular moment, we are not too sure how we feel about Billy.

While the film is pre-eminently successful in making us laugh, in constantly inventing new comic situations, we cannot help but recognise that Billy's is essentially a tragic situation. In what is intrinsically a more moving way than Thurber's Walter Mitty, Billy's tragedy is the result of his inability to take himself seriously. He can't manage either to come to grips with his family and his job in the undertaker's office, or to find the strength to leave them. His Ambrosial fantasies are much too attractive; and it is part of the charm at the centre of his character that his decision never to desert them, in its rejection of harsh reality, is a decision always to remain young. Yet, because the film is so close to its central character, so much a part of his many moods, we recognise his plight without ever feeling its impact. Like Billy, we find it more agreeable just to sit back and laugh.

There is another problem too, that makes our response more superficial than it might have been. Like Billy, the film rarely takes itself seriously: even in his daily life, there are constant shifts into fantasmagoria and farce. By making Mr. Shadrack (Leonard Rossiter) such an obvious figure of fun, by playing the roles of the grandmother (Ethel Griffies) and of Billy's "bloody" father (Wilfred

Pickles) almost entirely for laughs, the film sacrifices much of its emotional potential. And, at the same time that this element of comic caricature heightens the ambiguity of feeling, it leaves certain scenes dangling, oddly out of place in their context. For instance, the talk with Councillor Duxbury (Finlay Currie) on the moors, silhouetted and strangely symbolic, seems only tenuously related to the rest of the film; as indeed the funeral fantasy, by sharply interrupting the more sombre rhythm of the final sequences and so dispersing our feeling about the old woman's actual death, certainly detaches us from the potential poignancy of the close. Even the opening shots behind the credits, travelling along rows of suburban dwellings, keeping pace with the Housewife's Choice which at the moment is playing, although a marvellously lively beginning for a very funny film, seem only obscurely related to Billy's vanquished march through the streets which closes the picture.

If by the end, then, we feel that we have been more amused than moved by the film, that opportunities have been missed, we certainly carry away some of the joy and excitement that appear to have gone into the making of it. After *Terminus* and *A Kind of Loving*, *Billy Liar!* represents a more confident achievement for John Schlesinger, who looks very much at home with the challenges of 'Scope. Although the lack of unity seems a failure in conception, perhaps chiefly in Keith Waterhouse and Willis Hall's script, within individual sequences Schlesinger's pace scarcely falters and his judgment rarely errs. Most remarkable and most un-British is the zoom-tracking episode when Liz first comes to town. As she swings gaily through the streets, hopping across obstructions and skipping between cars, the camera follows her easily, observing her mugging response to everything she sees. If both Helen Fraser as Barbara and Gwendolyn Watts as Rita are more than adequate to their parts—are indeed perhaps more suited to the caricatured context in which they have been set—Julie Christie as Liz gives, to my mind, the most stunningly attractive female performance that we've seen on the British screen. That the strength of her performance, and indeed of her female self, heightens the central implausibility of her attraction to Billy and so further undermines the film's unity, is perhaps to be regretted. Yet the joyful manner of her presentation is so right for the general spirit of the film, and such a relief from the stodginess of so many British pictures, that I find it difficult to complain.

Finally, of course, the film is Tom Courtenay's. In this, his finest part so far, no praise could be too much and yet all seems impossible. It's not just that his body is so limber and his face so minutely expressive; it's more that just by a hint of an expression, a particular glance of the eyes, we can see that a change of mood is about to begin. Whether engaged in imaginary machine-gun slaughter of the people he feels are thwarting him, or made conscious of his real limitations when face to face with the magnificent Liz, Courtenay's playing has an intimacy and particularity about it which makes him perpetually fascinating to watch. It is with the help of such performances, plus some enterprising camerawork (Denys Coop), that John Schlesinger has been able to make *Billy Liar!* the most enjoyable film to have come out of the new British cinema.

PETER HARCOURT

NAZARIN

AT FIRST SIGHT (and with hindsight too, as the films have reached us in the wrong order), *Nazarin* (Contemporary) looks simply like a more ambiguous version of *Viridiana*. As in *Viridiana*, the initial problem is not difficult to diagnose. Nazarin is a priest who is utterly innocent and utterly good. But he lives in an evil and corrupt world, and in everything he does evil and corruption get the better of his pure intentions, so that at the end he can be accounted a failure, both in the world's eyes and, since into the bargain he nearly loses his faith, in his own.

The ambiguity lies in the fact that Buñuel refuses either to approve or condemn his hero, with the result that the film can be read in two different ways. Either we must take it that Nazarin is a fool and his saintliness futile and absurd, or else that his perseverance in the face of adversity is a living proof that faith is its own justification and reward, and the things of the spirit better and stronger than those of the flesh. Taken singly neither of these readings is satisfactory. The second, to a non-Catholic (and this would include Buñuel, if his opinion were to be asked), is merely repugnant. Nazarin may save his

Tom Courtenay and Julie Christie in "Billy Liar!"



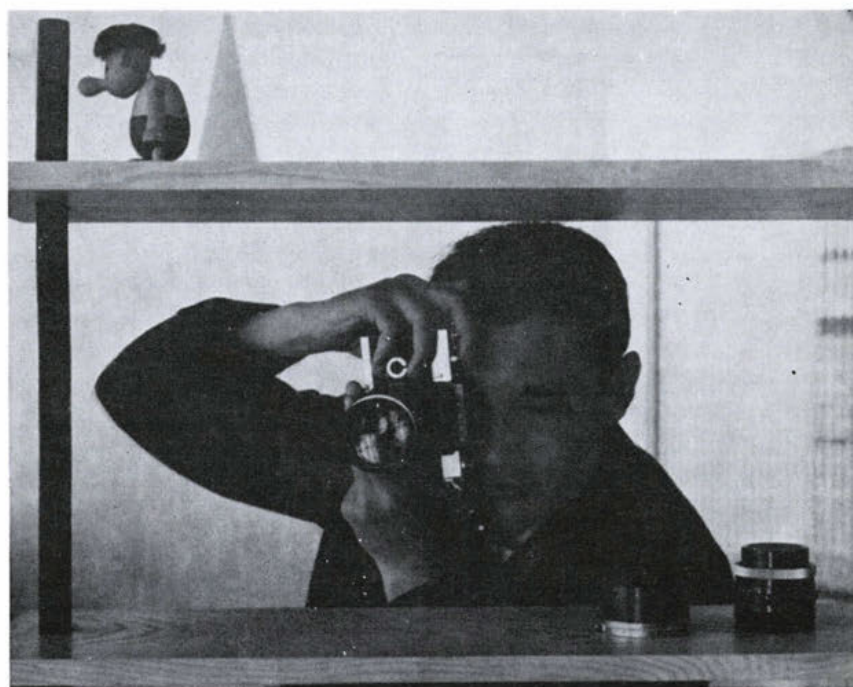
soul; but materially he is worse than useless—if not positively dangerous. But if Nazarin is to be condemned, who is to be saved? If he is wrong, who on earth is right? If he is futile, then what on earth is effective? The Revolution? Possibly, but Buñuel does not say so. In fact he offers no answer at all, even partial. Just a portrait of a sympathetic but otherworldly priest, and a fresco of a brutal but undeniably authentic world. We have no choice, therefore, but to accept both incompatible readings simultaneously, as hypothesis and antithesis, and mediate, for what it's worth, our own synthesis to the problem.

This is the answer, or substitute for an answer, that Brecht provides at the end of *The Good Woman of Setzuan*—"the curtains closed and all the questions open"—and more or less the same as that in *Viridiana*, where at the end Viridiana sits down to play cards with Jorge and Ramona, and the problem is uneasily shelved for the duration. But Brecht did believe that solutions were possible, and Buñuel in *Viridiana* left the audience in no doubt of his hatred for his heroine and all she stood for. In *Nazarin* however the basic moral ambiguity, Nazarin *contra mundum*, is not intended to lead to a solution, but is an end in itself. Buñuel's dialectic is all antithesis here, and his favourite weapon, beside physical shock, is paradox. Nazarin (Francisco Rabal) is poor and he is generous: he is robbed and imposed on. He is humble and submissive, and he is pure: he is found harbouring a prostitute and defrocked; accepts his humiliation stoically, but finds himself later convicted by his superiors of insubordination and pride. Out of charity and a feeling for justice he is kind in equal measure to the two hysterical women who follow him around: he is accused of needing a harem to satisfy his lust. He responds to violence with submission, and provokes more violence as a reply. Nor is he the only victim of this infernal dialectic. Andara, the prostitute, is graced by the absurd devotion of a dwarf, the only being who is prepared to offer it: in a moment of rage she kicks him squarely in the stomach. When the other woman, Beatriz, is told by her mother that her love for Nazarin is sexual (which it is), she throws a fit, and the mother takes advantage of this to restore her to her husband, who is a brute. Examples could be multiplied indefinitely, and they all lead to the same conclusion, or lack of one. Perversity and contradiction is the rule. Nothing goes right except when it goes wrong. There is no solution to anything.

Somewhere, I feel, Buñuel does see a solution. But it is an imaginary possibility which impresses itself on the film only by its absence. There could be a world, he implies, in which Beatriz did not have to choose between impotent frustration with a virginal priest and brutalised submission to a possessive husband. This world would be the utopia of the anarchist, but, realisable or not as a utopia, it is certainly not real within the film. Whatever the intellectual possibilities of an alternative, the real world for Buñuel, and the immediate world of his imagination, is a brutal and stupid one. This is what he sees, and sees with an inward visionary eye as well as outwardly. Into his vision he builds his ideas, a hatred of all that is cerebral, spiritual or rational, Christian or bourgeois; and vision and ideas are then used to reinforce one another in a close and vicious circle, from which, except by a prodigious leap of the imagination, there is no escape. Between *Viridiana* and *Jorge*, between the twenty sundry protagonists of *The Exterminating Angel*, locked up together in mutual torment, between Nazarin and his persecutors, there is not much to choose. Within the circle each is responsible for the other, and each is as bad as the next.

Because Buñuel's immediate vision covers only what is contained within the circle, and embraces it only in its most crassly material form, the problematic aspect of the film is easily obscured. The spectator is only struck by it after the film has ended, when he tries to piece together what it all actually means, who is right and who is wrong. The weakness of *Nazarin* is that it does require piecing together afterwards. It does not fall into place as it goes along, like *Viridiana*; nor does it deliberately defy rational construction, like *The Exterminating Angel* or *L'Age d'Or*.

My personal feeling is that Buñuel's best films are not the problematic (*Viridiana*, *Los Olvidados*), but the visionary and irrational (including some of his commercial pictures); and that the best moments in the problem films occur when the problem is least in evidence and the visionary element takes control, unhampered by the cold winds of reason. But the problem is a necessary part of the vision, for Buñuel's surrealism is really a kind of mysticism in reverse. He has had to wrestle, not with the devil, but with the angel in him, and in *Nazarin* traces of the struggle are still apparent. Like Pascal he believes that man is neither angel nor beast, and that "qui veut faire l'ange, fait la bête." Also like Pascal he is tremendously aware of the importance of deciding whether God exists or not (if He did, Nazarin would after all be justified). Buñuel made his



Michel Subor in "Le Petit Soldat".

decision, which is the opposite of Pascal's, long ago, but he has a recurrent need to confirm it to himself and to anyone who is prepared to listen. *Nazarin* is his most resounding confirmation to date.

GEOFFREY NOWELL-SMITH

LE PETIT SOLDAT

ANDRÉ GIDE, WHO NEEDLESS to say never really liked Cocteau very much, gives a glancing impression in his *Journals* of that infant prodigy's notion of war-work. During the First World War Cocteau was to be seen, dapper and incongruous in a borrowed soldier's hat, exhorting his audience with patriotic little dances on top of a bistro table. Bruno, the anti-F.L.N. adventurer of Jean-Luc Godard's *Le Petit Soldat* (Academy), is nothing like as saucy: equipped, like the older Cocteau, not with soldier's hat but with camera, he defines film as being "truth 24 times a second", and utters premonitions about photographing death. Like Cocteau's *Thomas l'imposteur*, he seeks "a sham death in which fiction and reality become one." And throughout the film's journalistic commentary on his states of mind as he falls in love, abortively attempts assassination, mirror-gazes, undergoes torture, he offers an exhaustive estimate of his reactions, his likes (Klee, America for its cars, Bach for the early morning and Mozart for the evening) and dislikes (politics, the Midi, Lawrence of Arabia). Such a devotedly introspective record is likely to tax the generosity of most of us. For one thing, we are being dared to share Bruno's (and, let's make no bones about it, Godard's) overriding sense of self-importance—and why not, except that few of us like to have character-references thrust, unsolicited, upon us?

And what a reference! Complacent and self-congratulatory in tone ("I was very young and very silly still"); portentous ("For me, the days of action are past; the time for reflection has come"); melodramatic (Bruno's gun is "black, mysterious, incorruptible"); fastidiously literal ("She wasn't as beautiful as yesterday"); suffering from a sort of intellectual measles marked by sex-in-the-head ("Are her eyes Velasquez- or Renoir-grey?") and a rash of cultural name-dropping—Bernanos, Malraux, Giraudoux, Modigliani, Aragon, Leslie Caron. Prolonged torture has little apparent effect on him, increasing if anything his monologic staying-power as he reaches the stunning conclusion that one likes some things (and people) and dislikes others. When we add to this Godard's own recent admission that his next film "didn't mean anything" (though there's surely a time limit to the amount of pleasure to be derived from viewing a bouquet of flowers); when we are faced, in fact, with Bruno/Godard's disavowal of political, moral and social theory in

favour of pure aestheticism, it is hardly surprising that Godard's future career should remain shrouded, for most of us, in uncertainty.

And yet, for all the self-mythologising compulsions of his heroes, Belmondo and now Michel Subor, and their truculent, self-consciously "with it" rejection of all cherished ideals, these are not the real factors behind Godard's continued equivocal standing as an artist. Admittedly *Vivre sa Vie* realised Godard's obsessive world of disengagement to the full; but though the equivocation was accordingly less marked, the paradoxical nature of his talent remains. And it is contradiction which, I suspect, is at the bottom of many critics' reluctance to commit themselves to Godard as readily as they have accepted Truffaut.

What are the poles of these various inconsistencies? I would say a life-giving urgency and abundance of visual style coupled with a meandering excess of verbal polemics; despair (Godard reveals his usual ritualistic predilection for last-minute slaughter) coupled with a peremptory demand for love and liberty; the woolliest kind of intellectual disaffiliation coupled with a clinically detached and clear-eyed view of terrorism; defensiveness about the ugliness of torture (Bruno tells us there's no point in dwelling on it, and the camera averts its gaze from each pain-filled climax to make a mannered journey along the dark contours of the house) coupled with a detailed record of the mechanics of torture.

Paradoxes like these may well be deliberate. I think they are. That doesn't preclude their defining Godard's limitations. There is both innocence and guile in their deployment, for not only do they help explain Godard's considerable appeal, they offer ample evidence of his knowing complicity in this appeal. There is truth in Bruno's attitudinising, but it is still a modish truth. The sum of his contradictions is reflected not only in the work of many young French intellectuals, but in the attitudes of other young (and not quite so young) people here and in America and elsewhere. Not for nothing, one feels, do those atrocity photographs in Bruno's room jostle for wall-space with pin-ups.

One contradiction remains, however, and it nags like Cocteau's soldier-hat. Self-validation is fine, but it relies vitally on whether the artist's choice of style and attitude can match up to his (in this case) sobering theme. The crucial question, it seems to me, is whether Godard has succeeded in wedding his disenchantment with hollow idealism to that same crudely (and I don't use the word in its pejorative sense) manipulated B-picture ideology which he first propounded in *A Bout de Souffle*. For there is no doubt that Bruno's grotesquely unsubtle attempts at murder, his evident immunity to fierce physical persuasion, his lucky escape through a first-floor window, his immediate success with the girl played by Anna Karina, are all meant to be accepted as unquestioningly as they would be in any Hollywood pulp-thriller.

It is here, I think, that Godard founders on an artistic fallacy. In the process of rejecting Left and Right and all that is hortatory or troublesome, he has merely put in their place another commitment, parasitically built upon film-going experience, which is just as oversimplified in its determinations of good and evil, just as damaging to the complexity and depth of human relations. What remains unclear is whether he is equating the hired killer with Marx, Freud and all the other charismatic ideals, or stating a preference for him as somehow being more "honest". Honesty is a word that has been much applied to the film—it offers an honest statement about the

attitudes of young people today, an honest portrait of Bruno, and so on. But, in the absence of anything broader than self-assertive rhetoric and short, sharp pangs of physical experience, it is difficult to respond whole-heartedly to the complexes of an artist whose dilemma springs from a determination to act solely on the mandate of the self.

Godard's stylistic habits and paradoxes suggest one further conclusion. His almost documentary presentation of solitude, brilliantly aided and abetted by Raoul Coutard's photography, in the last analysis confirms one's reservations. Take, for instance, the familiar evocative string of alternately bold and blurred images: on the one hand the stark hallucinatory outlines of black, neon-lit streets or the isolated figure against an empty white expanse of wall; on the other the jagged, close-quarters inspection of the two young men on the train, luxuriating in drearily jolly anecdotes of violence. The sense of staleness and threat is rivetingly conveyed as an extension of Bruno's own state of mind; and it owes a lot, revealingly, to Dreyer, who shared in his better-known films Godard's preoccupation with the lonely, the hunted and the doomed. The frequent suspension of sound, the silent-movie piano score by Maurice Leroux, the *Vampyr*-like way in which disjointed snatches of innocent conversation take on immediate and inexplicably sinister overtones—all these tricks, not to mention the heroine's surname, derive from Dreyer. So that what we are being offered is not an apprehension of life, but of imminent death; not thought, but a reflex of thought and, moreover, moviemania thought at that. Just as Wajda seduced us with Gothic symbols in *Ashes and Diamonds* (a film on a not dissimilar theme), so Godard seduces us with a mixture of newsreel actuality, hipsterism, *série noire* and Dreyerian intimations.

The result is a vision at once potent and facile: too facile, certainly, to lend force to the film's ultimate conclusion—that the heroine's tragic death has given Bruno an awareness not only of his own responsibility for his acts, but of life itself. There is precious little recognisable life, anyway, in Karina's Hayden-dancing, head-shaking, hair-combing cover girl. She is another moviemania dream, a gorgeous puppet; and the unlikely revelation that she is an F.L.N. agent seems part of the same dream. To a greater extent than he perhaps recognises, Godard owes his vocation to the tradition of the Agonised Romantic, and with that goes his desire to shock and seduce his audience. The disciplines of likelihood and logic are outside his function as he sees it; and if *Vivre sa Vie* convinces us in its concern for the Karina character, this is not because Godard has bowed to accepted Freudian and sociological theory. He hasn't, and there's no reason why he should. It is because (and Godard himself would probably scorn the orthodoxy behind such a suggestion) the despair-tainted life of a prostitute recommends itself to his ethos, yet manages to avoid that discrepancy between subject and sensibility which makes *Le Petit Soldat* such a fantastic piece of sophistry.

PETER JOHN DYER

FREUD - THE SECRET PASSION

INTELLIGENCE AND RESTRAINT are the most marked qualities of John Huston's *Freud—The Secret Passion* (Universal-International/Rank), a fictionalised account of an indeterminate period in the life of Sigmund Freud, beginning in 1885 (when he was twenty-nine) and including his studies under Charcot in Paris, his marriage, his first application of the technique of psychoanalysis, his self-analysis, his association with Dr. Breuer and his discovery of the Oedipus Complex.

Taking considerable dramatic licence, the film has used it to convey a surprisingly valid general impression of its subject. Studios attention is paid to extant photographs and other pictorial documentation; the scene in Charcot's clinic, for instance, bears a striking resemblance to the lithograph brought back from Paris by Freud. Huston's visual vocabulary, although never original, captures with sombre authority the precise overtones that the adjective "Freudian" has acquired in everyday language. Freud himself (Montgomery Clift), meditating under Gothic arches or clutching his mother's snake bracelet, inhabits a waking world of Vienna that is almost as symbolic as the etched world of the womb which he re-enters in his dreams. The filtered scenes, in which his patient, Cecily (Susannah York), relives her past, both real and

"Freud—the Secret Passion": a dream sequence in which Freud reconstructs his father's funeral.



imagined, are perhaps the most arresting examples of Douglas Slocombe's consistently effective mood photography.

The plot, by Charles Kaufman, aiming at veracity of flavour rather than incident, telescopes the bulk of Freud's most easily apprehended and generally palatable ideas into a comparatively short space of time and the analyses of relatively few cases. Freud's conclusion that hysteria stemmed from a passive sexual experience before puberty was, in actual fact, based on thirteen fully analysed cases, and not on the single case of Cecily Koertner (roughly that of "Fräulein Anna O."), who provides the fictitious springboard for a wide range of findings in the film. This fairly intelligent piece of compression does, of course, incur a loss of depth. The exact nature of this loss is implicit in the surprise expressed by his biographer, Ernest Jones, at Freud's "credulous acceptance of his patients' stories of seduction." Dr. Jones proceeded to find in this enigmatic credulity a key to the nature of Freud's genius—something that the film, attempting to cover too much ground on too slight a foundation, has no time to explore. Moreover, Freud's main reason for giving up his belief in the reality of these seductions was their impossibly high incidence. Here the film, awkwardly limited to a single case, has recourse to its crudest dramatic device—that of the patient threatening to commit suicide unless she is believed. This improbable scene (valid only in the sense that Freud had, more or less, imposed his original theory on his patients) is the more regrettable in that it is not typical of the production as a whole.

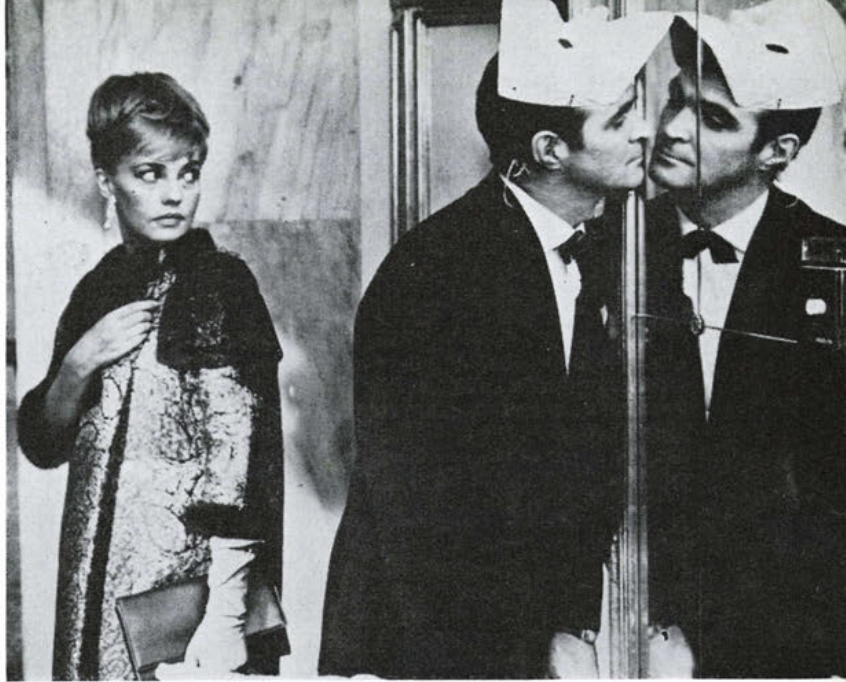
The film was, of course, made without the authorisation of Jones's heirs, and against the wishes of the Freud family, which no doubt explains the almost total omission of Freud's intensely experienced emotional life. Montgomery Clift has to do his best with a very desiccated character compared with the real Freud, and the final screenplay, by Kaufman and the producer Wolfgang Reinhardt, is more concerned with abstractions than with people.

An intellectual adventure of this kind is an enormous challenge to any director, and best suited to a poet of the cinema, which Huston emphatically is not. In fact, Huston seems inhibited rather than inspired by it: his energy bottled up and his camera forced to a standstill by careful compositions. A reference in the opening commentary to Copernicus and Darwin, and indications throughout the film of society's antagonism to Freud's ideas, imply that Huston and his scriptwriters understand what sort of revolution Freud brought about. Yet there is no attempt to interpret this in terms of attitudes that have altered as its direct consequence. The film might have been made at the time of Freud's death (in 1939) or even earlier, and said as much, or as little. One is not implying that it could, or should, have added anything to the sum of human knowledge; what one would have liked to see was an addition to the sum of human experience. It should have recreated the feeling of being in at the birth of something that has, for better or worse, established a new heaven and a new earth. The duality is important for, as far as Freud's work is concerned, it is no longer a matter of preaching to the unconverted, but of interpreting to a generation already conditioned by an accomplished fact. Curiously, the film suggests no awareness of this; in expressing the hope that we will make use of the knowledge "now within our grasp," the final commentary contrives to strike the very note of timid anachronism least suited to its soaring theme.

ELIZABETH SUSSEX

In Brief

EVE (*Gala*) is really a rather worrying case: a film which succeeds very well on its own terms even though its terms are not now, apparently, at all what the director originally had in mind. Advance reports from France assured us that with twenty minutes shorn from its original 150-odd it was jumbled and virtually incomprehensible; so the news that the British version was twenty minutes shorter still led one to expect that nothing would be left, except perhaps a few isolated moments such as enlivened *The Damned*. But not at all; whoever did the cutting for the British version seems to have made an exceptionally tactful and intelligent job of it, removing all the loose ends of the French version and leaving a classic exposition of *amour fou* in a fairly simple story told in a reasonably direct and uncluttered fashion. Admittedly, one may wonder here and there at the casual way characters are brought in when they have some bearing on the central plot, and shuffled unceremoniously off the scene when they haven't (that played by James Villiers is an obvious example); but on the whole what we see of them engenders nothing but relief at their summary dispatch.



Jeanne Moreau and Stanley Baker in "Eve".

The result is almost certainly not quite the film Joseph Losey intended, which clearly had far more pretensions (whether justified or not it is difficult to guess) to intellectual and psychological profundity. But as it stands it does make a thoroughly teasing, enjoyable and, after all, quite intelligent entertainment out of a basically rather trashy and commonplace story. In James Hadley Chase's original, an American writer of dubious credentials (he stole his first book from his dead brother but has subsequently written successes of his own) falls for a trappy *femme fatale* who little by little destroys him. In the film he becomes a Welsh writer straight out of Alun Owen, and his temptress a glamorous gambler on the fringes of the international set, while their affair unrolls against a panorama of wintry Venice stunningly captured in black and white by Antonioni's favourite photographer, Gianni Di Venanzo. Thus dressed, the story takes on, if not greater profundity, at least greater interest and novelty-value. Stir in some outré references—a harking-back to Billie Holiday, either through her records or through her autobiography, which the heroine is at one point glimpsed reading in the street; an almost equally obsessive preoccupation with Garbo, usually apparent from the way the heroine is photographed and related to her physical surroundings—to give it all intellectual chic, and what more do you need?

Well, naturally, Jeanne Moreau to play the temptress. Having secured this last vital ingredient, Losey certainly makes the most of her. It is not by any means her best or subtlest performance, but it is a blazing piece of star acting every inch of the way, remote, mysterious, fabulously glamorous, five times larger than life. At the end of the film we are not one whit nearer to understanding why Eve's life should be dedicated as it is to the dual passion for acquiring money and destroying men, but when did *femmes fatales* have to explain themselves? *Eve* is a superlatively glossy and elegant entertainment; one cannot help wondering whether, if it were given the room to aim at something more, it might not well end up as something decidedly less.

JOHN RUSSELL TAYLOR

INITIALLY AT LEAST, it seems as if Nanni Loy's **THE FOUR DAYS OF NAPLES** (*Gala*) is the film animated by those qualities of honesty and intelligence necessary to put straight the record on the Italian resistance, confused since *Open City* in 1945. At last, one feels, a film that is history and not hagiography. The joyful, ever so slightly ironic shouts of "We've lost the war!" which greet the opening announcement of Mussolini's overthrow, suggest that at least conventional patriotic heroics have been safely put away for the duration. Fallacious impression: for within five minutes the film has degenerated into cliché, from an *Eroica* all'Italiana to simple (and atrociously dubbed) Heroics, Italian style. It becomes abundantly clear that it is not honesty that motivates the film, but piety—piety to the heroic people of Naples and to the unity of the Italian resistance. No doubt the Neapolitans deserve this homage to their memory. The Naples rising was a memorable isolated event in the pre-history of the organised resistance, and because it was isolated and premature it was both more spontaneous and lacked the fratricidal elements of the later struggles in the North. Historically, it presents no problem: it was straightforward anti-German and anti-war, and the film, mechanically, follows suit.

Commonplace in its intentions, and with a script and direction that are insufficiently incisive and dramatic to realise these intentions to the full, Nanni Loy's film has at least the virtues of its vices. Where the piety and tendentiousness fail to convince, or to appear at all, the elements of a good, honest-to-man amoral war film break surface and reanimate the screen. Contrary no doubt to its original intention, the film demonstrates brilliantly the near impossibility of inadequate occupying forces holding down an uprising in a totally resistant city, once the task has been accomplished of getting a courageous few to initiate the rising in the first place. It captures the atmosphere of confused street fighting better than any comparable European film (a Fuller film on this subject would, in this respect if no other, make compulsive viewing). Cameraman and laboratories between them also deserve credit for a photography that is sharp and modern, yet mingles well with occasional stockshots from wartime documentaries. For the rest one's main complaint—leaving aside the question of history versus hagiography—is that, except for substituting a (theoretically anonymous) Lea Massari for the more traditional Magnani figure, *Four Days of Naples* is in almost all respects indistinguishable from so many other similar films on similar themes.

GEOFFREY NOWELL-SMITH

THE RAVEN (Anglo Amalgamated/Warner-Pathé). 24 years ago *Tower of London* torturer Boris Karloff drowned Vincent Price's Duke of Clarence in a butt of malmsey. There was nothing auspicious about the partnership at the time. Indeed only a year or two later Karloff, Peter Lorre and Bela Lugosi were attending the death agonies of the Thirties-style horror film in *You'll Find Out*, a singularly joyless spoof of its own kind. Now 75, as distinguished and obliging as ever, Karloff has been reunited with Price and Lorre in *The Raven*, an altogether luckier parody about a trio of rival fifteenth century sorcerers. Richard Matheson's script, a good deal more tenuous than its predecessors in the Corman-Poe canon, at least treats its actors generously to props, incantations and quotable lines. Price is gingerly taking stock of the ingredients (dried bats' blood, vultures' tongues, entrails of uneasy horse) to deliver Lorre of his corvine form, when he finds that he has run out of dead man's hair. Generously he offers to rob his long-departed father of a lock or two, and while Lorre commiserates on the cobwebby disorder of his host's family crypt ("Gee! Hard place to keep clean, huh?"), father's corpse rises urgently to lay a decaying hand on his son's



arm. "Beware!" he moans, kindly if a trifle inexplicitly, sinking back exhausted to await his second summons from the tomb. This takes place, a hallucinatory flash as effective as the last shot of Ma Bates in *Psycho*, during the film's climax—a splendid duel of supernatural strength between a high-camping Price (literally up the ceiling at one point) and Karloff's sternly frowning Dr. Scarabus. Neck-twining snakes become scarves; a baby cannon strolls in from Feuillade's *Les Vampires*; Floyd Crosby's Panavision, Pathécolor camera weaves and prowls in somnambulistic bliss. A pity the equation doesn't always add up: there's too much slack, due perhaps to an imbalance between the comedy, which runs riot, and the horror, which trails behind in the wake of previous Corman films. Rathbone would have been an asset—his Richard III did wonders for *Tower of London*, and he concluded Corman's last film, *Tales of Terror*, on a steadily grave and astringent note. Admittedly Hazel Court is a pretty fiendish substitute as Price's faithless spouse, Lenore. Her fiendishness just isn't in the same class, that's all.

PETER JOHN DYER

CLEOPATRA (Fox). Everyone within reach of a gossip column knows that *Cleopatra* did not spring (more's the pity) fully grown from the head of Walter Wanger. The sets left sadly crumbling at Pinewood; the changes in director, scriptwriters, stars; the illnesses and the quarrels; the adding of this and that to the budget; the Taylor-Burton story: *Cleopatra* long ago stopped being just a film and became one of those great symbolic objects littering the contemporary scene. Yet within the publicity cocoon there still lingers the comparatively modest little epic that Walter Wanger, the man who saw it through all its troubles, apparently first had in mind; and, oddly enough, that's approximately what remains. If we hadn't been told so often just what it cost, it would be hard to deduce it from what appears on the screen.

As usual, and in spite of everything, Egypt and Rome look as though the decor had been conceived by someone for whom earth could hold no fairer sight than a Hilton Hotel. The big scenes of luxury and splendour (the dinner on Cleopatra's barge, or her circus-show ride into Rome) suggest that Egypt, too, had its PR men, borrowing their ideas of grandeur from the rituals of the film première. And an odd result of this softened-up vulgarity (which is never of the blinding, bad taste DeMille sort) is that Antony and Cleopatra suddenly appear in a new and wholly unexpected light as the first expense-account high-livers, roistering away while the slaves and eunuchs hover like expectant head-waiters. Perhaps this is partly because even the final script (by Joseph L. Mankiewicz, Ranald MacDougall and Sidney Buchman) has not achieved anything like consistency of tone. At the end, the dialogue seems drastically inhibited by an awful awareness that it must risk comparison with Shakespeare, and gropes helplessly after a tragic idiom of its own. Earlier, much of the script is of the order known as 'literate'—that is to say, the sentences are very carefully grammatical and just a little too long for some of the actors to speak with ease or conviction. And then we go modern, with a pert "Oh, it's you!" from Cleopatra when Caesar stumps into her bathroom, or a hysterical "Get out!" from Antony. "I've been reading your commentaries," says Cleopatra, as a polite, if outré, conversational gambit to Caesar.

Joseph Mankiewicz has tried—indeed he has—to make this a film about people and their emotions rather than a series of sideshows. But for this ambition to hold up, over the film's great footage, he needed a visual style which would be more than merely illustrative, dialogue really worth speaking and actors altogether more persuasive. As the sets seem to grow bigger and bigger, so progressively the players dwindle. Rex Harrison, who has the diction that can make a mild quip sound like genuine wit, is an efficient, light-weight Caesar; Roddy McDowall sneers under yellow curls as Octavian; Kenneth Haigh makes an unusually plebeian Brutus; Pamela Brown glides down corridors as some sort of high priestess; and Richard Burton and Elizabeth Taylor, it must be admitted, remain very much Mr. Burton and Miss Taylor. There are, of course, moments: the opening shot, of the funeral pyres on the battlefield; the first sight of Cleopatra's barge sailing into Tarsus; Antony's flight from Actium, with the prow of his boat cutting through his own men as they struggle in the water. Here the camera is saying something. But *Cleopatra* (and whether the name itself should be pronounced with a long or a short 'a' is left appropriately vague) remains a film without immortal longings.

PENELOPE HOUSTON

Duel of sorcerers in "The Raven".

SORCERERS

SOME ASPECTS OF PROPAGANDA FILMS/ROBERT VAS

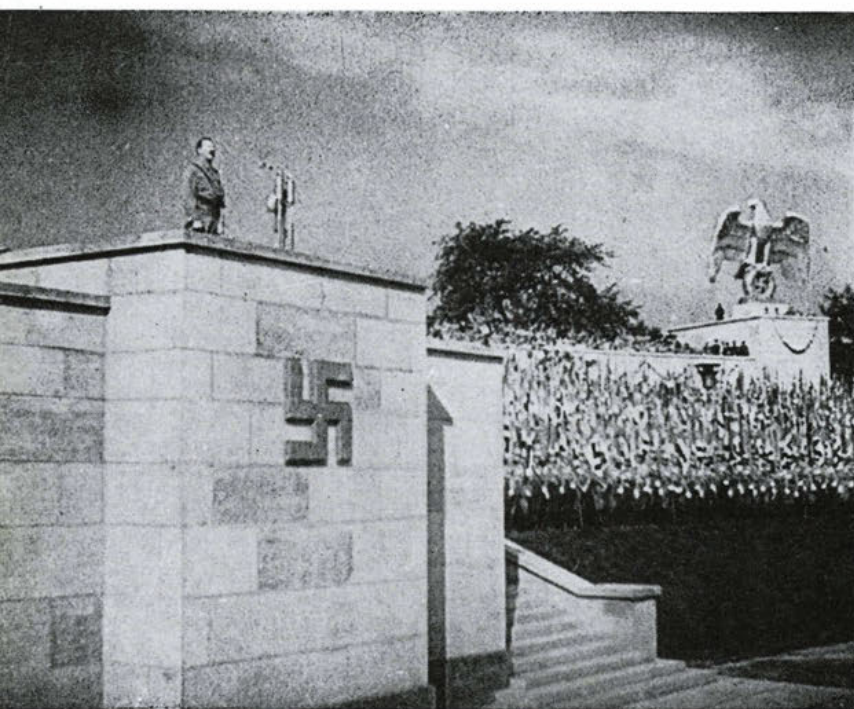
OR APPRENTICES

Humphrey Jennings' "A Diary for Timothy"



The ultimate truth is penultimately always a falsehood. He who will be proved right in the end appears to be wrong and harmful before it Meanwhile he is bound to act on credit and to sell his soul to the devil in the hope of history's absolution.—Extract from the Diary of N. S. Rubashov in Arthur Koestler's "Darkness at Noon".

THE IDEA FOR THIS ARTICLE came during a recent stay abroad when I watched a television broadcast of *Battleship Potemkin*. An audience of many millions is an event even for an acknowledged classic: the maggots wriggling in the rotten meat, the sinister 'intellectual' pince-nez swinging on the bulwark and Vakulinchuk's martyrdom made their disturbing way into the cosy living-rooms. Then, after the pathetic scene of the catafalque on the shore ("For a Plate of Soup"), the scene faded out. End of Part One—and the screen burst into an idyllic landscape of green pastures complete with yodelling shepherd and peacefully browsing cows, swiftly compressed into a tiny bouillon cube as happily mooing symbols of Concentrated Energy. This was followed by the Last Word in Boot Polish: reflected in the shiny tip of a shoe we can see the tin. On the tin there's another tiny shoe which reflects another tin on which there's . . . and so on. Then we went back to Part Two of the main feature, the glittering Czarist boots on the Odessa Steps; and the inevitable, almost too obvious



Nuremberg Rally: a shot from "Triumph of the Will".

link between the two scenes lent an almost intolerable obscenity to the horror that followed. The mother walked up the steps holding the dead body of her son, her glasses broken to splinters. "It could never happen with New Contact Safety Lenses," I thought . . . and never before has the scene evoked quite such emotional intensity.

Inevitably, almost of its own volition, the idea crystallised: not so much the difference between good and bad propaganda (those commercials were excellent of their kind, depending quite a lot, in fact, on an Eisensteinish cutting technique), but the way we have all grown hardened to it and are left untouched. Having become an everyday occurrence, film propaganda has lost its drive, and with it the stimulating role it has so often played in the history of the cinema.

Or perhaps it has simply taken the wrong direction? If so, why and how did this happen? Certainly something to think and write about. But even to raise the questions is far from easy, since the subject is vast and almost unexplored. Apart from the classic definitions, some routine classification and a few random thoughts, propaganda films are simply taken for granted. Propaganda, we tend to think, is something we live with, inevitable and inescapable. The Central European proverb "I caught a Turk—he won't let me go" fits the situation perfectly. The word 'propaganda' has acquired all sorts of overtones during the last quarter of a century; and along with this extension of meaning has grown up that basic mistrust which is our only weapon of defence against it. What on earth could be more suspect than film propaganda? Cinema itself may be called a cheat against reality, but the way the propaganda film operates is a double cheat—it is, in effect, nothing but the sad story of how they've pulled the wool over our eyes.

To raise the moral issues and contradictions involved in this kind of film is yet another task. Did it fertilise the art of the cinema, or work against it? Did it liberate or shackle cinema's powers of expression? We are bound to ask more questions than we can hope to answer. But this article is intended as a sort of subjective reconnaissance of only a few aspects of the subject, mainly those concerned with the creative side rather than with the equally important questions of audience response. Enough if it helps to prepare the ground for a more

disciplined and organised attack on this contradictory and menacing subject.

* * *

Grierson's classic definition, "Propaganda is the art of public persuasion," does justice to the concept and views it with patience and hope. But this was written in the early Thirties, when propaganda films in Britain meant socially conscious educational material about aero-engines, slums or the six-thirty postal collection. To propagate was the same as to sow the seed of general knowledge. With the film "a single say-so can be repeated a thousand times a night to a million eyes. It opens a new perspective, a new hope to public persuasion." One cannot but feel a certain nostalgia for this period when all our handy definitions were born; when such concepts were still pure and uncorrupted, offering themselves up to clear-cut classification.

As early as 1931, Paul Rotha had enough apt examples to lay down a categorisation which is still perfectly valid. "Film propaganda," he wrote in *Celluloid, The Film Today*, "may be said to fall roughly under two heads. Firstly, there is the film which wields influence by reason of its incidental *background* propaganda. Secondly, there is the *specifically designed* propaganda film, sponsored as an advertisement for some industry or policy." And it was in the same essay that he put into words the idea that inevitably comes to mind when thinking about this subject: "In one form or another, directly or indirectly, *all films are propagandist*. The general public is influenced by every film it sees. The dual physio-psychological appeal of pictorial movement and sound is so strong that if it is made with imagination and skill, the film can stir the emotions of any audience." John Grierson put it all more dramatically: "No form of description," he wrote, "can add nobility to a simple observation so readily as a camera set low or a sequence cut to a time-beat."

This is why film and propaganda *had* to meet. Cinema is reality sifted, pointed and intensified; propaganda is a sifted, pointed, intensified idea used for a specific purpose. And their co-operation was a genuinely mutual one. First involuntarily, then more and more consciously, they have always leaned on each other. When cinema first became aware of its own language and power, it was, in fact, through propaganda. From then on its great moments were also those of the "art of persuasion".

Perhaps it all began with the committed way *Birth of a Nation* was put together: the construction of, say, the scene of Lincoln's murder, provoking hatred for the assassin and sympathy for the unsuspecting President. The scene of the liberating Klansmen intercut with the lynch gang makes an even more outspoken (and in fact contradictory) propagandist statement. And closely allied is Kuleshov's famous experiment using a single shot of Mosjoukine's face apparently reacting differently when juxtaposed first with a shot of a plate of soup, then a coffin with a dead woman, and finally a little girl playing with a funny toy bear. Isn't this innocent little trick a key to all the more sinister ones that were to follow? It was the young Soviet cinema which used it first, along with all those other methods which the text-books call the basic principles of the art of the film. In Eisenstein's *Strike* (1924) we find the first intuitive, crude formulation of almost everything that has followed up to the present day, from the sheer elementary power of moving images to the most complex metaphors and abstractions.

It was an intellectual urge which made Eisenstein seek out this language; but he was also a propagandist, in those days even a pamphleteer. It was the effort to achieve propagandist simplicity that encouraged him to think in symbols like *The Capitalist* and *The Proletarian*—and so to explore for the first time the cinema's ability (and in a way necessity) to work in terms of types. It was the loose, undisciplined, Mayakovskyish propaganda which enabled him to conceive his film with only an intellectual continuity, and allowed him to

ramble freely between the naturalism of the rubber hose sequence and the grotesque and puzzling abstraction of the gnomes, or to link the shot of the slaughtered bull to a clumsily infernal tableau of massacred workers. *Strike* was the first resounding exclamation mark in the history of the cinema, as well as the first haphazard specimen of its intellectual capacities.

Editing, as Eisenstein used it, is a way of showing one's true colours. A cut is a kind of helpful conflict, a harmonic contrast between two shots. A cut in *Battleship Potemkin* between the boots of the Czarist troops and the desperately fleeing crowd is a plea in itself: a division between good and evil done with the intensity which only a propaganda film can afford and only a sharp cut can put over. And it was out of this propagandist immediacy that one of the cinema's most versatile and dynamic means of expression emerged.

This was the first common ground between film and propaganda, and led to the first turning-point in their history. Before *Potemkin*, film propaganda was used only rather intuitively. Through the artistic success of Eisenstein's film the Soviet cinema became aware of its own possibilities as a world-wide propagandist, and from then on developed them consciously. Even the Master himself could afford to ramble freely within the enormous and more propaganda-conscious concept of his masterpiece, *October*, only after *Potemkin* had shown what could be achieved. It was this new-found awareness which introduced the milk separator as a dramatic hero, or encouraged Dziga-Vertov to let his propagandist camera go for a carefree stroll. Film as Art was born.

The West, too, found similar common grounds. *All Quiet on the Western Front* in a way summed up the American cinema and foreshadowed the increasing social awareness of the Thirties. In Britain, the propagandist impulse gave the Griersonians their "generous access to the public." Buñuel made propaganda when he explored the horrors of *Las Hurdes*. And in the Germany of the Weimar Republic propaganda was the essence and spice of artistic expression, through the idealistic plea for poor *Mutter Krausen*, through a Brechtian stylisation of Rich and Poor, through the sober realism of *Westfront 1918* and the conscious message of *Kameradschaft*. In Mother Russia the Dovzhenko of *Earth* and *Ivan* used propaganda to achieve ends more personal than those desired by the regime, but there is otherwise much to criticise or disregard in Soviet cinema, until *Chapayev* found a way to combine the useful with the truthful. In these years it really does seem true that "all films are propagandist," whether knowingly or unknowingly. The hit song in *42nd Street*, "I'm Young and Healthy, Full of Vitamin A", was like a sad dedication for a world running full speed towards a new war; and the puckish ingenuity of Disney's *Three Little Pigs* helped America to confront the Big Bad Wolf of the Depression. The artistic conscience still dared to hope that it could help.

* * *

Then comes the paradox, so sad and so revealing. Though propaganda in the early Thirties was conscientiously aimed at social progress, the period's crowning achievement is at once a powerful rebuff and a Machiavellian masterpiece. With *Triumph of the Will* (1934-36) education turned to deliberate misteaching, and the whole idea of propaganda moved towards the era of Goebbels and notoriety.

Leni Riefenstahl's film was a diabolic combination of reality and stylisation, Wagnerian mysticism and present-day immediacy, beauty and threat, commanding *tableaux vivants* and an overpowering urgency of movement. Above all, it was a masterpiece of timing. What makes a propagandist film truly great is perhaps this recognition of the right moment, the precise point at which it can assert itself most forcefully. Miss Riefenstahl aimed the superman idea towards that man-in-the-street who, in a confused and disillusioned Europe, was almost waiting for an order to obey. Propaganda had meant goodwill, generalised humanism with all its limitations. Against this,

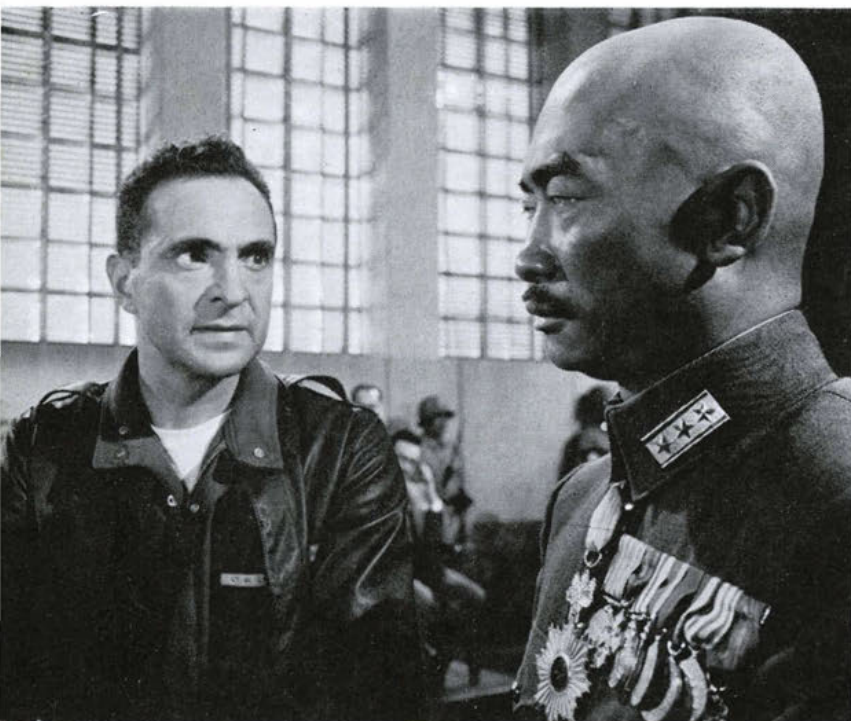


Al Jolson and Harry Langdon in Lewis Milestone's "Hallelujah, I'm a Tramp" (1933), a comedy with music of the Depression years, set in a community of down-and-outs and featuring a hit song titled "What do you want with money".

Leni Riefenstahl's film set a firm statement, replacing doubt by military certainty, problems and hesitations by an unambiguous exclamation mark. People who saw the film must have felt that when those in charge were so sure about where to put the camera, they could not but be right . . .

But *Triumph of the Will* also came as a reminder that the real propaganda film can't stand half-measures. It cannot really afford to let us think, and is consequently a totalitarian form of expression. After the final fadeout we are supposed to go straight into action, to seize the nearest spade and begin to dig (as I am always prepared to do after the tremendous last scene of Turin's *Turksib*). Propaganda may have helped Eisenstein to contribute in a general sense to the language of the cinema, but in *Triumph of the Will* Miss Riefenstahl went right back to the core: she liberated the elemental power of direct propaganda and crystallised its full meaning. Her film makes everything that had gone before look merely committed or argumentative. While making full use of Eisenstein's techniques for pictorial rhythm, his flair for symbols or the handling of crowds, she cheerfully rejects his intellectual conscience. To hell with it! Let's have the *real* stuff! And instead of the Master's sophisticated exclamation marks (put down, one feels, with a gold-nibbed fountain-pen on fine paper), here boots thunder out the message on the Nuremberg pavement. (This image of marching boots, indeed, could be taken as the trade mark of the propaganda film: it keeps popping up regularly every ten years.) Here was sheer pagan pomp, shorn of the ballast of humanitarian mental reservations. Reality and symbol walk in step with each other to a thunderous marching rhythm, and for the first time history is used in a direct way to shape history.

Editing, too, takes on a different role. Soldiers marching down a street may be just a bunch of men, but a film shot of their trampling boots expresses *power*. So the editor doesn't give a damn about hidden visual connections, about contrasts or intellectual metaphors. His job is to perform a 'simple' cheat: to make two boots out of one, and a victorious regiment with an ideology out of a few lines of marching soldiers. And indeed if those boots, so irresistibly aligned by the editor's



Two faces of Japan. Left: American airman faces Japanese justice in "The Purple Heart" (1944). Right: Brooklyn (Rosalind Russell) meets Tokyo (Alec Guinness) in "A Majority of One" (1961).

scissors, had marched down from the screen, Europe would have been trampled under within a week . . .

This, then, was the ultimate: something that holds together what has been achieved before, and finds its consummation in a dazzling display which can lead nowhere (except to imitation). The Triumph of the Will was really the Defeat of our Infallibility: a symbol of how propaganda has contributed to the natural language of the cinema and led it, simultaneously, to the brink of an abyss of difficult moral questions.

* * *

The film made us aware, as nothing else could have done, that here we have a dangerous weapon which can easily misfire. The genie had at last escaped from the tiny bottle and loomed over our heads, monstrous and powerful, ready to carry out any service—if we knew how to handle it. Intellectual and artistic conscience was bound to ask itself whether we are masters of our own strength, or merely the sorcerer's troubled apprentices.

One question-mark begets another. Isn't it opposed to the essence of art, which searches for a *universal* truth, to lift out one single, allegedly useful truth and use it perhaps to subvert others? Is such a violent and arbitrary shaping of reality simply immoral, a misuse of democratic ideals? Or can it, because of its crisp immediacy, help to fertilise a vigorous, committed form of artistic expression? Is it a good or an unhealthy sign, for instance, that the same single image of the Nuremberg Rally can be used by Miss Riefenstahl for agitation, then in the British *Swinging the Lambeth Walk* as a piece of scathing irony; that many years later it can be applied (by the Thorndikes, in East Germany) as Communist propaganda, and that finally (after 27 years!) it can be used by Erwin Leiser in an attempt at sober evaluation?

If I feel that everyone must find his own answers to such questions, this is not an evasion. The answers depend largely on personal judgments about aesthetics and politics, on whether one sees art as firmly rooted in its own age or floating in the vacuum of the absolute. The artist, we said, searches for "a universal truth"—but is there any such thing? Everything that rises to the level of artistic truth is bound also to be a private truth, something which the artist has first recognised

for himself and to which he gives a new and personal meaning. And who can tell, in any case, where art ends and propaganda begins? After the war neo-realism turned a clean page, trying to rehabilitate this whole besmirched concept, to look for the universal truths and to assert its genuine commitments. But again comes the question: where is the borderline between a propagandist and a committed cinema, and does it even exist? Whenever a cinema becomes socially conscious, sooner or later it is bound to be transformed into propaganda. Are *O Dreamland* or *Los Olvidados*, *Pather Panchali* or *La Terra Trema*, 'only' committed films, or do they qualify as more direct persuasion? Commitment seems to be the word which legitimises propaganda. But art is an outcome of an immense will to communication. And involvement—why whitewash it?—is propaganda.

There may be a difference, though. One may well expect honesty from a committed artist, but not necessarily from the maker of a direct propaganda film. The product is of too dubious a moral value. Yet the question remains worth asking: is it necessary for the propagandist-artist to believe in what he or she is doing? Miss Riefenstahl has repeatedly declared that she knew nothing about the objects of the Nuremberg Rally film—and yet she was able to blend the work of 120 people over a two-year creative period into a breathtaking artistic unity. Can we believe her? Can the thing be done by sheer talent alone? And do we have here a case of intensified commitment or just another monumental and painfully absurd cheat? The moral wilderness of film propaganda is certainly the worst place in which to look for artistic absolutes. Its language has been polished through upholding the bloodiest ideas of mankind, and it seems a fitting product of a world in which it takes an almost physical effort to remain neutral.

Let us grant, however, that it may be possible. And even if all art is more or less propaganda, we can still ask in reverse whether propaganda is art. Many people would give a negative answer. If we *do* live in such circumstances, they would argue, amidst such unstable social, moral and aesthetic values, then that is all the more reason for the artist to remain impartial. But for the artist to seal himself hermetically into a baroque

castle and float in a dream-world of the absolute seems to me a blind, cowardly and comfortable form of self-deception. And it strikes me as a kind of propaganda in itself—perhaps the worst kind. It talks about an attitude which it lacks the guts to uphold. The involved artist is concerned to strip life bare and to take his chances; but the other will prefer to dress up a skeleton in decorative clothing. He may find many 'absolute' qualities in the *mise en scène* of *Triumph of the Will*: for him art creates its own laws and these justify its aims. But this, it seems to me, is the attitude of the intellectual *Übermensch*. And there isn't a baroque castle on earth, or any laws of art, which could hold out against those marching boots.

There is a fascinating dialectic to be observed in the question of how far propaganda is a product of its times and how far it can influence them. Political and social circumstances may produce an artist who exerts an influence (as Miss Riefenstahl's film doubtless did); the circumstances then change, and the new situation throws up its counter-artists. The very intensity of the propaganda genre means that it carries its own antidotes with it, so that each period seems to fight out its own particular battle between two different kinds of propaganda. Early Nazi films find their opposition (only seemingly indirect) in *L'Espoir* or *La Grande Illusion*. In the moral wilderness there is still a continuous line pursued by the progressive conscience: in post-war documentaries about hunger and want; in neo-realist films standing for basic human rights; in the conscience of American journalistic films during the McCarthyist era; in the intellectualism of the French documentarists; in the attack against old standards by the Free Cinema group. Such continuous conflict is one of the things that helps to keep the genre alive.

It is typical of the anarchistic rootlessness of film propaganda (and a compliment, too, to its versatility) that its greatest works have a way of emerging from what seem to be the least promising circumstances. Eisenstein's intellectualism came out of (and almost in spite of) a bloody revolution. Riefenstahl's work emerged from (and against) the desperately humanist atmosphere of the Thirties. And out of the Second World War came the incarnation of the humanist artist, a poet as noble, mature and controlled as Humphrey Jennings.

Jennings' subjective style was perfected at precisely the moment when the general language of the propaganda film was at its most direct. War seems to be the test, to some extent even the harvest, of propaganda. Both involve uncompromising and totalitarian concepts. And to loosen up such a state of emergency in the arts, at a time when everything is gauged to the tight bark of a military command, is in itself an act of real courage. But this kind of liberation, with its rejection of all imperative symbols, was precisely the essence of Jennings' art. He recognised that true patriotism (and also good propaganda) can have its roots in the conscious temper of the people rather than the showy trappings. Riefenstahl tramples her awed audience underfoot; Jennings lifts them up again into humanity. Riefenstahl's propaganda quickly exhausts the few superficial symbols of its ideology; Jennings looks for the inner heartbeat of his country in troop trains, factory canteens, wheatfields, fire-stations, National Gallery concerts. At long last propaganda was flowing again from the most intimate beliefs and visions of an artist. Even the most stubborn purists might be reassured that public persuasion *can* be an art.

For the umpteenth time in its own history alone, *montage* once more takes on a different role. For the old trickery of two-boots-for-the-price-of-one, Jennings substitutes something much more flexible. Like a Debussy or a Renoir, he finds fresh associations of pictures and sounds, discovers an airy music of images to mirror a sea of moods, connections, contrasts, episodes in the life of his country at war. The historic moment creates its own symbols: a barrage balloon;

Myra Hess playing Beethoven ("German music"); the bare, empty walls of the National Gallery. For the poet, these are simply observations made in a particular context: nothing and therefore everything. And perhaps this is why, once the war was over and the intensity of the circumstances had vanished, Jennings could never really recapture this rare poetic amalgam of the ordinary and the extraordinary.

* * *

Similar contradictions are apparent in the screen propaganda of the present day. As the world political climate became more and more gloomy during the Fifties, so film propaganda grew scared of its own power and responsibility. Soft, mild, middle-of-the-road film-making became the style. The political situation, fertiliser of propagandist art, was itself too desperate, and faced with the elemental problem of sheer survival everything became ridiculously over-simplified. Symbols seem to be produced on the assembly line, and concepts like The Bomb, The Wall, The Button themselves neutralise any kind of artificial symbolism which propaganda could provide. The marching boots of the old stereotype simply can't keep up any longer. Nor, I think, would Jennings' gentle poetry be able to catch up with and confront the situation. And while on the



Propaganda and war. Above: the Soviet "Battle of Stalingrad" (1949). Right: John Huston's "The Battle of San Pietro" (1945).

surface things may appear to be over-simplified, beneath this surface the atmosphere is more confused and complex than ever.

The easy way is to make the most of the simplified situation by accepting it at face value. It has become too easy for anyone with a few sympathetically progressive ideas to become a passionate benefactor of mankind. The Humanist tag may be tied to a Kramer or a Chukhrai—provided it is spelled with a capital H. Make a neutral film about the last people surviving on earth, première it in a 15-nation saturation booking, and you become the greatest prophet that money can buy. Make a film about Innocent Blond Ivan caught up in the Inhumanities of War, and you will win all the top prizes at San Francisco . . .

But perhaps we help to foster this image by ourselves becoming gradually more and more immune to human misery. In Japan they have made a wide-screen, colour, stereophonic epic about the annihilation of mankind by nuclear war, addressed (as a new type of publicity stunt) directly to Messrs. Khrushchev and Kennedy. Even in the Thirties this could have seemed a disturbing, thought-provoking Wellsian vision: now we just smile at it and make a quick comment on the clumsiness of the special effects . . . And why not? We can watch the genuine real-life horror, all the painful superlatives which our contemporary existence can produce, at home in our slippers, after tea. And after close-ups of the killing at Leopoldville; the earthquake in Iran; the public execution of a head of state in a television studio, all laid at our feet by the unsurpassable magic of the telephoto lens and the cathode ray tube, what price a *Las Hurdes* in the cinema?

Yet here seems to be the root, and also the solution of the problem. Great things may have become everyday things; the capital letters may have been hacked to death. Isn't this, then, the precise moment when an artist should step in, should reassess the bloated and overworked concepts by subjecting them to his own personal viewpoint, treating them with that indefinable plus quality that only an artist can contribute? It is impossible to intensify the exclamation mark slammed down by a single shot of a heap of human hair at Auschwitz—but at the same time it *can* be intensified into a *Nuit et Brouillard*. By just looking around "you have seen nothing at Hiroshima"—and that is why Resnais strove for and achieved so much more than that. This is the way Franju's *Hôtel des Invalides* attacked, and Buñuel, Ichikawa, *Two Men and a Wardrobe*, *Vivre, Actua Tilt* and many others.

True, it is a question whether this long overdue invasion of conscience, and the return to an Eisensteinian intellectual humanism, may bring death or regeneration to this fundamentally totalitarian form of expression. A few years ago many devotees of the genre praised to the skies the effective Communist propaganda films made in East Germany by the Thorndikes. Perhaps they seemed like the last of the Mohicans: the defenders of the "real stuff". But, I feel, the quieter, sometimes hesitant voice of awakening conscience means much more now than a few smart pranks with the editor's scissors or some bombastically effective pictorial harangue.

Perhaps the whole concept of film propaganda, in itself and in relation to its audience, will soon have to be reassessed. Films by Chris Marker and Jean Rouch illustrate the close links with television, but also the film's own superiority to it. In these works, at long last, propaganda is being written in lower case rather than in the old capital letters. And at a time when history so visibly outruns us, is formed, reformed and indeed deformed before our eyes, the real aim of propaganda ought to be to determine (and no longer to confuse) the place and role of human beings in our topsy-turvy universe. It's in this way that the genre could be rehabilitated.

But in the meantime there is something we can benefit from right now. If propaganda, with all its dangers, reminds us of the need to face up to the world we live in, urges us not to remain neutral but to try to adopt a standpoint, then let it come. It will help us to build up our own resistance. After all, it was *we* who allowed ourselves to be cheated.

BOOK REVIEWS

EISENSTEIN DRAWINGS, introductory text by Y. Pimenov. (Isskustvo, Moscow.)

EISENSTEIN'S DRAWINGS ARE ODDLY REMINISCENT of Toulouse Lautrec's, chiefly in that he used the characters and atmosphere of the theatre and the circus, an artificial situation, to show what is grotesque in the real. But Toulouse Lautrec went no further than the image which itself contained his thought, while to Eisenstein the drawing was but the beginning of his thought which went further than and beyond the drawing.

Eisenstein began to draw seriously at an early age: his work was at no time mere pencil doodlings or notes of casual impressions; in each drawing there was a purpose, and he called them his 'visual reports in shorthand'. In the days of the February Revolution he started to do caricatures, two of which appeared in a Petersburg daily paper over the unusual signature of 'Sir Gay', which was in fact a play on his Russian name Sergey.

First working in the theatre, he used water colours for his sketches which for some reason had an inhibiting effect upon his originality; but in 1924 he firmly established himself as an artist in cinema and by then his drawings were much more mature: he had learned to 'pitch his vision', in Serov's phrase, which he was so fond of quoting. He would enjoy drawing any number of versions of a psychological situation which interested him: when he was ill in Mexico he did 120 drawings illustrating the murder of Duncan by Macbeth. Another favourite theme is that of patient and doctor, of which there are many examples in this book.

When lecturing to his students on the art of the cinema, he would say of drawing: "To get your effect, you need not draw every detail of a face: one eye wide open, the mouth pursed into a small O, or again, an eye cast down—there are three essential indices by which a face can become fully expressive."

Every art, he said, tried to go beyond its bounds, to go beyond realism. Every art had to have its original method, its own aesthetic. Cinema was to be the outlet for all the other arts, the next step which they could take. Sculpture comprised the spirit of construction including the static form of the human body. Painting was also static, but painting could also draw upon the world for its background.

Perhaps the turning point of his life was at the age of nineteen when he became convinced of his affinity with Leonardo, whose visions were doomed to be unrealised because of their magnitude. On the other hand, Eisenstein's ability to put his ideas into visual form was balanced by an intense analytical energy. His intellectual curiosity led him into unexpected places: for example, he set himself to explore the nature of the Japanese language and to learn three hundred ideograms. He became obsessed with hieroglyphics, and later this was to serve him as a corner-stone for the film technique of montage.

Eisenstein discovered the power of the cut, the montage—the synthesis when two pieces of film, two scenes, are spliced together. A new meaning is created, one that did not of necessity exist in any single cut used. He called it "the synthesis of the cut". By cutting together scenes which he felt belonged together, either for the idea or for the visual content, or by repeating an idea or visual image a number of times, he discovered that the emotional impact on the viewer is enormous; indeed, more effective than any other medium of art or communication.

To a great extent, the technique of montage utilises the cartoonist's weapon of sarcasm and irony, but much more effectively, for the following reasons. First, in film, one has a completely captive audience; and second, through cutting, the irony can be greatly multiplied. For instance: the portrait of a well-fed bourgeois playing with his fork as he eats from a lavishly burdened table is greatly intensified by the scene that follows, showing a starving worker searching for food in a garbage can, and using the same movements

as the well-fed man with the fork. You can find another illustration in Eisenstein's film *Strike*, in which a group of striking workers are shot down by a contingent of Cossacks. This shot is followed by a scene showing the slaughter of an ox by a butcher. Naturally, this is much more effective propaganda than a still cartoon.

This book represents his wonderful variety of subject and imagination: his fantasies on classical, mythological themes (Orestes revenging himself for his father's murder, the blind Oedipus, Apollo caressing a leopard, a faun playing the flute); his portraits of artists in which he somehow incorporates the atmosphere of their art: for example, looking at that of Bach, the picture of a man of the 18th century with stern and concentrated features, one seems to hear the playing of an organ. The drawing of Maurice Maeterlinck is unrealistic, the subject's features are not there; instead, there is a blurred, shapeless being, sexless and ageless, rounded and vague—presumably representing Eisenstein's image of the decadent symbolism of the philosopher-author of *The Blue Bird*. He sees in Ibsen the doctrinaire preacher moralising upon the fate of his heroes.

But his drawing of Daumier as a figure swept off in a whirlwind, though no portrait, wonderfully reveals his admiration for this artist, the 'Michelangelo of the caricature'. He considered Daumier to be the forerunner of the art of the cinema, because of his ability to draw the different parts of the human body at different stages of movement. We find the same dynamic process in his own sketches for *Alexander Nevsky* and *Ivan The Terrible*.

His vision of tragedy can be seen in the sinister drawing of Richard III, where one's attention is immediately drawn to the expression of the face with its gloomy line of eyebrows dark above the thin, long nose, and the steel-like muscles of the neck. As for comedy, Eisenstein was deeply involved in the problem of comedy in art. "The laughter of destruction is close to my heart," he wrote. "The destructive hissing of the pamphlet."

Eisenstein always put down in graphic form the film he was about to make, both pen and pencil in hand and alternating them feverishly. The pen would start the drawing, while the pencil would hurriedly write down the dialogue. This was valuable for the actors as well as for all the other participants in the film. Before writing the score of *Alexander Nevsky*, we learn that Prokofiev insisted upon seeing Eisenstein's sketches. They were not dogmatic, they were not intended to be slavishly followed, but they did represent the skeleton of the story, the vision. "A hint, drawn on a scrap of paper, sometimes reaches the screen, sometimes it goes astray. At times it changes shape when it encounters an unpredictable actor, or it is met by lighting of an unexpected kind, or faces other unforeseen circumstances."

The Ice Battle in *Alexander Nevsky* was shot in 1938 in the studio of Mosfilm, in July, during a torrid heat wave. This is evidence of the unswerving character of the director, as well as of the meticulous preliminary work he had done beforehand. He himself said afterwards: "We pulled off the make-believe winter. The reason for its success is that we did not try to fake a winter, nor to deceive people with artificial icicles and other items. We only borrowed from the winter its light and sound effects: the whiteness of the ground and the darkness of the sky. Winter was present at the battle in the measure in which it could not be distinguished from a genuine one."

Eisenstein's genius for capturing on paper in advance the essentials of a film makes us all the more eager to see, after the publication of these drawings, the several thousands of further drawings still hidden away in their folders.

MOURA BUDBERG

THE INNOCENT EYE: The life of Robert J. Flaherty. By Arthur Calder-Marshall, based on research material by Paul Rotha and Basil Wright. Illustrated. (W. H. Allen, London, 42s.)

FOR SEVERAL YEARS AFTER Flaherty's death in 1951, Paul Rotha and Basil Wright collected and collated research material for a "biographical film history" of the man and his work. Their completed typescript is now in the Museum of Modern Art Film Library in New York, but the publishers who originally commissioned the work, and W. H. Allen who have now presented it, both felt that in its original form its interest was too restricted and that it should be re-designed to appeal to a wider public. The rewriting was eventually undertaken by Arthur Calder-Marshall, who makes it clear in his preface that the conclusions reached are his own and that they do not in every case agree with those of Rotha and Wright.

The early chapters are concerned with Flaherty's work as an explorer in the Canadian arctic and they make excellent use of his own vivid writings on the subject. It was his youthful experience as a prospector, growing to know and admire the Eskimo way of life, which was to become the almost accidental basis of his film-making.



An Eisenstein self-portrait. An exhibition of his drawings and manuscripts, sponsored by the Friends of the National Film Archive, can be seen at the Victoria and Albert Museum until November 10th.

Rotha is credited with the idea that the whole pattern of his intuitive approach to film can be traced to his understanding of Eskimo art. As the Eskimo carver waits for a seal or a bear to emerge from the ivory, releasing what is already there rather than creating a new form, so Flaherty watched and waited with monumental patience until he recognised on the screen the shape of an idea he had conceived deep in his unconscious. It was a slow and often a very wasteful method, maddening to professionals who collaborated on his later work, and probably increased his difficulties in finding commercial sponsorship. But it was the only way he could work, and attempts to impose a more organised or economical system always came to grief.

The remainder of the book, sub-titled "Flaherty the artist," concentrates on the creative processes rather than on biographical detail, so that what emerges is a long and detailed study of the films rather than an account of the man and his life. This was perhaps inevitable as Calder-Marshall has no personal knowledge of Flaherty (they met only once, at a party); but he is able to view the legend from a comparatively detached viewpoint and he deliberately refrains from repeating the many apocryphal tales that have gathered round Flaherty's memory. There is nothing detached, however, about his attitude to the films. He is a wholehearted fan, and one feels at times that his enthusiasm leads him into praising Flaherty at the expense of other documentarists such as Grierson who had different aims. Writing for instance of the potter sequence in *Industrial Britain* he says:

"One sees at this single point at which their work crossed the fundamental division between the two men, Flaherty's individual quest for the long truth and Grierson's for the brief progressive one. Grierson had an articulate social philosophy. Flaherty had an inarticulate human love. The two met in the potter's hand and face, but began to diverge in what was made of them."

The implication that Flaherty's was the higher concern is hard to accept, especially for those of us who found his romanticism more picturesque than truthful. But have we perhaps been judging a poet by the standards of social realism? Calder-Marshall is persuasive enough to make one want to reconsider and especially to see the key film *The Land*, which Grierson holds to be the greatest he ever made.

Grierson himself, of course, never wavered in his loyalty to Flaherty, even when their paths were most divergent. The way in which he and the other British documentarists rallied again and again to his defence is one of the most heartening lessons the book has to teach.

Nevertheless it is hard to understand what audience the publishers are hoping to reach. Though the first part, "Flaherty the explorer," is of fairly general interest, the rest will appeal mainly to readers already familiar with the films. In which case it does seem a pity, readable though the present text is, that so much of the original research material has not seen the light of day. As it is, the appendices by Rotha and Wright, consisting of a synopsis of each film and an admirably accurate filmography, are valuable for reference, and so is the efficient index. The stills have been chosen with a splendidly sympathetic eye to illustrate the spirit of the films.

BRENDA DAVIES

BOOKS RECEIVED

THE ART OF THE FILM. By Ernest Lindgren. (Allen and Unwin, 30s.) Revised and enlarged edition of the book first published in 1948.

CLASSICS OF THE FOREIGN FILM: a pictorial treasury. By Parker Tyler. (Citadel Press, New York, \$8.50.)

SINGLE BED FOR THREE: a *Lawrence of Arabia* notebook. By Howard Kent. (Hutchinson, 25s.)

FLAVOUR OF GREEN TEA OVER RICE

continued from page 186

suddenly emerges to take a major role in the film, roundly telling off the matchmakers for their shady dealings, and rather unconvincingly becoming the mother's mainstay against loneliness by visiting her regularly after the daughter's marriage. In *Late Spring*, on the other hand, every character and every scene is perfectly integrated in the main theme (not a father's loneliness as in *Autumn Afternoon*, but rather a daughter's reconciliation to the idea of marriage), and the character of the daughter's friend is carefully established so that her final offer of friendship to the father is completely and convincingly in character.

The integration of character and incident is so exact throughout the film that it is one of his great masterpieces, and the sequence in which father and daughter make a last trip together to Kyoto before her marriage is probably one of the most perfect in Ozu's work. At the end of their visit, the daughter, realising that this is their last trip together, becomes afraid; he calms her, and they go to bed. As they talk peacefully in the dark, the father falls asleep, and the camera cuts from a close-up of the daughter's face, now tranquil, to a shot of a single vase framed in the window. The image is one of perfect elegiac beauty, carried over in the following sequence (the father and an elderly friend sitting next morning in the calm of a ruined temple yard, talking of the pain of raising children only to watch them grow away), to the scene back in Tokyo, preparing for the wedding, when the father sinks to his knees in wonder at the beauty of his daughter in her wedding-dress. By comparison, the *Late Autumn* remake gives short change indeed, with a rather perfunctory conversation between mother and daughter on their last trip, and then, quite simply, a conventional studio photograph of bride and groom in their wedding clothes. It is as though Ozu, because it was a remake of a subject he had already explored, used bits and pieces without ever becoming involved.

Late Autumn, in fact, like *Good Morning* and like *Early Spring*, has no true centre, and therefore no dynamic growth: the sum of its scenes adds up to no more than the sum of its scenes. In the great films, on the other hand—*Late Spring*, *Tokyo Story*, *An Autumn Afternoon*—there is a subtle Ozu alchemy whereby the separate elements expand and coalesce to form a perfect whole. At the end of *Tokyo Story*, the old man mourning for his wife walks out on the terrace in the early morning. "It was a beautiful sunrise," he says quietly. "I think we're going to have another hot day." This is the point to which the entire film has been moving: it is a summation of experience.

CORRESPONDENCE

Cinéma-Vérité

The Editor, SIGHT AND SOUND

SIR,—Louis Marcorelles' article in the Summer issue of *SIGHT AND SOUND* on the latest in *cinéma-vérité* is a noteworthy example of how illusive truth can be. I was present at the Unesco Film Club showing of *The Showman* and *La Punition* at which Roberto Rossellini spoke, and in my opinion his remarks were inspired rather than (as Mr. Marcorelles wrote) "aggressive".

"Why did you make the film?" Rossellini asked the Maysles brothers after seeing *The Showman*, and after explaining that he did not wish to be rude but sincerely wanted to know whether they considered themselves artists (in pursuit of Cinema) or scientific researchers (in pursuit of Truth). In this context Al Maysles' reply ("We just like to make movies") seems sophomoric rather than "splendid".

Following *La Punition* and Rouch's explanation that he had shot the entire one-hour film in two days, without a prepared script or treatment, with untrained actors, without rehearsals, giving little or no direction, etc., etc., Rossellini made these comments: "I have more confidence in you, Jean, than you have in yourself . . . I refuse to believe that you have so few talents . . . Next time I want to see a film that you do make, not one that you not-make." And he concluded that there wasn't anything wrong with *cinéma-vérité* that couldn't be cured by a little hard work. "The problem with you people is this," Rossellini said, as if he knew what he was talking about, "—you're just lazy."

This is the truth. Maybe not the whole truth, and certainly not "Nothing but the Truth" (as Mr. Marcorelles recorded it), but it is the truth as I heard it, as I remember it, and as I like to tell it.

Yours faithfully,

CECILE STARR

Paris, 7.

Subsidy in Italy

SIR,—In the Spring number of your journal, towards the end of The Front Page, you say: "We have asked our film-makers often enough why they can't be Antonioni or Olmi, Resnais or Truffaut."

May I suggest that if you wanted to give your readers some sort of answer to the question as far as Italy is concerned, it would be very much to the point to give them the full story of state subsidy in this country: of how all political parties have since the war regarded the film and television industries as important instruments of national and international public relations, that post-war American term for propaganda, in a country still ridden with mental reserve on the question of national unity and with various complexes in the international field.

It is not generally known that the Italian state is even in trouble with the Common Market authorities under Article 92 of the Rome Treaty for excessive subsidisation of films.

Is it not going too far to suggest by implication that similar security of office would not bring forth a mushroom growth of British film directors?

Yours faithfully,

NICHOLAS M. CARROLL

Milan.

Distribution U.S.A.

SIR,—Just the mention of the term "film distribution" is likely to make a film addict's blood boil, especially in the United States. Below are a few reasons why.

A New York filmgoer looking in his newspaper for the newly released foreign films would find: *The Trial*, *Sanjuro*, *The Bad Sleep Well*, *The Idiot*, *Winter Light*, *Le Amiche*, *Il Grido*, *Le Caporal Epingle*, *Paris Nous Appartient*, *The Eclipse*, *Pickpocket*, *Love at 20*, and most recently *Il Posto*. But all of these are not new. *Le Amiche*, *Il Grido*, *The Idiot*—the presence of these can be explained by the interest in the early work of Antonioni and Kurosawa, just as a similar interest saw the arrival of the early Bergman films a few years ago. But what of *Paris Nous Appartient* and *Pickpocket*? Both were released several years ago in Europe. This makes one wonder which films made within the last year we will have to wait several more years to see. And which will we never see at all?

Another aspect of distribution (though somewhat less infuriating) is the change of titles which some films undergo. Two classic

examples are *Los Olvidados* and *I Vitelloni*, which became *The Young and the Damned* and *The Young and the Passionate* respectively. Others, within the last few years, are: *Persons Unknown* to *Big Deal on Madonna Street*; *Ascenseur pour l'Echafaud* to *Frantic*; *Sait-on jamais? (When the Devil Drives)* to *No Sun in Venice*; *The Loneliness of the Long Distance Runner* to *Rebel with a Cause* (only in some parts of the country, notably Chicago); and *Il Posto* to *The Sound of Trumpets*.

A short time ago I went to Chicago (a distance of 100 miles) to see *The Eclipse* and *Il Grido (The Outcry)*. *Il Grido* turned out to be not *Il Grido* but an Italian film of 1946 known as *Outcry*—and the theatre manager was unaware that he was showing the wrong film. Furthermore, *The Eclipse* had been cut over 20 minutes. The abstract shots from the final sequence were missing (all that remained were two shots lasting approximately ten seconds); the initial scene was only one-third its original length; missing entirely was the sequence in the deserted street with the dogs; missing also were many shots which established the final sequence. However, a scene which had been cut from the print I had seen some months before was intact.

And such is the state of affairs of film distribution. . .

Yours faithfully,
BRIAN SCOBIE
Janesville,
Wisconsin.

Correction—Work in Progress

SIR,—Just for the record, *Nothing But the Best* is produced by Domino Productions Limited for world distribution by Anglo Amalgamated Film Distributors; and released in the United Kingdom through Warner-Pathé.

Yours faithfully,
DAVID DEUTSCH
London, W.1.

Admiradores

SIR,—We put in your knowledge that from the day 5th November of 1962, function in the city of Rosario, Argentina, the club of Fans of Dirk Bogarde, club are constitute for a group fanatic and admirer of the grand English artist this club whose mission principal is to distribute photograph.

We want to invite to Dirk Bogarde's English Fans, that wish to belong to the club they can solicit associated cards completely free; they must send us their name and address, no more.

Our club has fellows all through America and Spain, too. It has distributed more of 14,000 actor's photos free, between the solicitors, we have made many radio competitions and by press too, about his films, and the results of the last of them about which were the films people prefer were: (1) *Victim*, (2) *The Wind Cannot Read*, (3) *Libel*, (4) *The Spanish Gardener*, (5) *The Angel Wore Red*.

From the first days of the club, in November 1962, it has controlled together with Rank's, Columbia's and Metro's about the number of days in which Bogarde's films have been exhibited and: Rank's by 168 days, Columbia 48 and Metro's 30 (246 days in general since May 5th). In this time seven city's cinemas had dedicated completely programmes to this actor.

We salute you affectionately and we wish you a lot of future exits.

Yours faithfully,
NELLY MIGUEL
Club Admiradores de Dirk Bogarde,
Suipacha 1135,
Rosario de Sta. Fe,
Argentina.

GREAT FILMS

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- **I'M ALL RIGHT JACK**—Peter Sellers

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THE FESTIVALS: TRIESTE

continued from page 179

Trnka's ingenious *The Cybernetic Grandmother* was the only short of merit; and the Trieste world premiere of Roger Corman's *X—The Man with the X-Ray Eyes* proved something of a dud. American-International's most ambitious production to date, it is concerned with the tribulations of Dr. Xavier (Ray Milland), discoverer of a radio-active serum by which his eyes are turned into X-rays and his life into hell. He can spot tumours inside fully-dressed patients, see through women's evening gowns and win a fortune at Las Vegas—but he soon goes completely daft from the strain. Floyd Crosby's camera supplies some pretty tricks, but the film falls flat, largely because of lack of vision on the director's part. A group of French cinephiles has recently attempted to recruit Corman as a new cult director; but the game just can't be played. Here he actually exemplifies what is most debilitating at the heart of the current crop of opportunistic SF and terror films: an antiseptic and unpoetic approach to material which cries out for imagination and tremulous involvement.

I was quite excited by Trieste—more than most of those present—though the level of most of the other films was barely ankle-high. Yet *Ikaria* alone is solid enough proof that adult SF films can be made; and in another direction Klouchantzev's *Planet of Tempests*, an extraordinary new Russian space adventure (inexplicably not sent to Trieste) is proof that Flash Gordon is still very much alive and kicking. But next year Trieste will have to cast its nets both wider and farther back. Rather than programming, in competition, films both mediocre and several years old (*Masters of Venus*, *Attack of the Puppet People*), we should be given non-competitive surveys of classics in the genre. And next year there must be a batch of entries from that country where the general quality of SF cinema is currently highest—Japan.

ELLIOTT STEIN

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

WARNER-PATHE for *The Servant*, *Billy Liar*, *A Majority of One*, *Strangers on a Train*, *The Raven*.
PARAMOUNT PICTURES for *Seven Days in May*, *The Trouble with Harry*, *Rear Window*.
UNITED ARTISTS for *It's a Mad, Mad, Mad, Mad World*, *Lilies of the Field*.
20th CENTURY-FOX for *The Purple Heart*.
RANK FILM DISTRIBUTORS for *The Birds*, *The Man Who Knew Too Much*, *Freud—The Secret Passion*.
BLC/BRITISH LION for *David and Lisa*, *Sammy Going South*.
GALA FILM DISTRIBUTORS for *Eve*, *Piel de Verano*, *The Battle of Stalingrad*.
ACADEMY CINEMA for *Le Petit Soldat*.
CONTEMPORARY FILMS for *Paris Nous Appartient*.
SEBRICON for *Le Rendezvous de Minuit*.
TROY-SCHENCK PRODUCTIONS for *Psyche 59*.
HAL WALLIS-KEEP FILMS for *Becket*.
SHOCHIKU PRODUCTIONS for *Tokyo Story*, *Good Morning, Late Autumn*, *An Autumn Afternoon*.
ROME-PARIS FILMS for *Le Mépris*.
ARGOS FILMS for *Muriel*.
VOX/TITANUS/MARCEAU/COCINOR for *Il Demonio*.
FILM POLSKI-MINIATURE STUDIOS for *Labyrinth*.
CZECHOSLOVAK STATE FILM for *Ikaria XBI*.
SOVEXPORT FILM for *Childhood of Ivan*, *Nine Days of One Year*.
CAHIERS DU CINEMA/LOUIS MARCORELLES for photograph of Jacques Rivette.
L.P.C./CAHIERS DU CINEMA for *Les Dernières Vacances*.
AGENCE DE PRESSE BERNARD for *La Religieuse*.
LES FILMS ROGER LEENHARDT/LOUIS MARCORELLES for photograph of Roger Leenhardt.
NATIONAL FILM ARCHIVE for *Diary for Timothy*, *Triumph of the Will*, *Hallelujah, I'm a Tramp*, *Battle of San Pietro*.

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SOLE AGENTS for U.S.A.: Eastern News Distributors, 255 Seventh Avenue, New York 1, N.Y.

PRINTED BY Brown Knight & Truscott Ltd., London, England.

BLOCKS BY W. F. Sedgwick Ltd., London.

ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTION RATES (4 issues), 18s. including postage.

U.S.A.: \$3.50. Price per copy in United States, 85 cents.

PUBLICATION DATES: 1st January, 1st April, 1st July, and 1st October.

Overseas Editions: 12th of these months.

A GUIDE TO CURRENT FILMS

Films of special interest to SIGHT AND SOUND readers are denoted by one, two, three or four stars

- **ANGEL BABY** (*Crusader*) The clash of sex and evangelism in Baby Doll country. Crisp, intelligent and compact, beautifully acted by Mercedes McCambridge and newcomer Salomé Jens. (George Hamilton, Joan Blondell; director, Paul Wendkos.)
- **BILLY LIAR** (*Warner-Pathé*) Adaptation by Waterhouse and Hall of their own play about Billy Fisher, undertaker's clerk, fantasist and born liar. Always energetic, often very funny, and compellingly acted by Tom Courtenay and Julie Christie. (Wilfred Pickles; director, John Schlesinger. 'Scope.) Reviewed.
- ***BIRDS, THE** (*Rank*) Hitchcock's doomsday fantasy about the day the birds hit back at the humans at Bodega Bay. Neat build-up and some masterly sequences of claustrophobic tension, though the trick work gets in the way of any very prolonged suspension of disbelief. (Tippi Hedren, Rod Taylor, Jessica Tandy. Technicolor.)
- CLEOPATRA** (*Fox*) The film which makes it all too apparent that with £14 million, any amount of assorted talent, extravagant locations, and a plot-line sanctified by Shaw and Shakespeare, it's still possible to make a pretty dull movie. (Elizabeth Taylor, Richard Burton, Rex Harrison; director, Joseph L. Mankiewicz. DeLuxe Color, Todd-AO.) Reviewed.
- CONDEMNED OF ALTONA, THE** (*Fox*) Hopelessly miscast and mis-directed travesty of Sartre's very considerable play about post-war guilt and responsibility. Only Fredric March and Françoise Prévost, as the German shipping magnate and his tormented daughter, keep their heads above water. (Sophia Loren, Maximilian Schell, Robert Wagner; director, Vittorio De Sica.)
- DR. CRIPPEN** (*Warner-Pathé*) Plodding account of the sad little wife-murderer, hovering uneasily between courtroom and flashback. The acting, particularly by Coral Browne as the unfortunate Belle, is far superior to anything else. (Donald Pleasence, Samantha Eggar; director, Robert Lynn.)
- ****8½** (*Gala*) Fellini's film, as autobiographical as you care to read it, about the life and times, memories and desires, of a Roman film-maker. An extraordinary tour round an artist's mind, photographed with stunning virtuosity by Gianni Di Venanzo. (Marcello Mastroianni, Claudia Cardinale, Anouk Aimée.) Reviewed.
- *EVE** (*Gala*) A thoroughly splendid Jeanne Moreau teases, titillates and torments poor Stanley Baker into a grovelling wreck in Gianni Di Venanzo's beautifully photographed Venice. Many brilliant flashes in an uneasy coalition between *The Blue Angel*, *La Dolce Vita* and *The Bible*. (Virna Lisi, Giorgio Albertazzi; director, Joseph Losey.) Reviewed.
- *55 DAYS AT PEKING** (*Rank*) Story of the Boxer Rebellion and siege of the Peking legations, rethought by Samuel Bronston, Nicholas Ray and Philip Yordan as a U.N. allegory. Chinese court and British embassy share the English actors; Charlton Heston and Ava Gardner stand in for the great powers. Fine fireworks. (David Niven, Flora Robson. Technicolor, Technirama 70.)
- FOR LOVE OR MONEY** (*Rank*) Kirk Douglas as a San Francisco lawyer hired by a rich widow as matchmaker for her three daughters. Rather lackadaisical comedy, nowhere near as bright and shiny as it would like to be. (Mitzi Gaynor, Gig Young, Thelma Ritter; director, Michael Gordon. Technicolor Print.)
- *FOUR DAYS OF NAPLES, THE** (*Gala*) Nanni Loy's tribute to the Neapolitans who rose against their German occupiers looks very authentic in the long shot battles but holds its personal anecdotes down to the level of heroic clichés. Outstanding camerawork by Marcello Gatti. (Lea Massari, Frank Wolff, Georges Wilson.) Reviewed.
- *FREUD: THE SECRET PASSION** (*Rank*) Everything considered, a fairly sober and occasionally perceptive account of the Master's life, though the dream sequences are as absurd as usual. Montgomery Clift gives a monotonous, staring-eyed performance as Freud himself. (Larry Parks, Susannah York; director, John Huston.) Reviewed.
- GATHERING OF EAGLES, A** (*Rank*) Life on a Strategic Air Command base, with the usual martinet commander who neglects his wife in the interests of operational efficiency. Also as usual, the aircraft come off better than the people. (Rock Hudson, Mary Peach, Rod Taylor; director, Delbert Mann. Eastman Colour.)
- GAY PURR-EE** (*Warner-Pathé*) Full-length UPA cat cartoon, with simple Mewsette rescued by honest Jaune Tom from the clutches of wily schemers Meowrice and Mme. Rubens-Chatte. Some pastiche effects (Lautrec, Van Gogh, etc.), and Judy Garland and Hermione Gingold on the sound track, but design and cat-characterisation both sketchy. (Director, Abe Levitow. Technicolor.)
- *HOW THE WEST WAS WON** (*M-G-M/Cinerama*) Bulging with stars and shivering at the seams, the first Cinerama story film mixes eye-catching spectacle with slabs of static narrative. Ford's Civil War sequence comes closest to taming the giant screen. (Debbie Reynolds, James Stewart, Carroll Baker; directors, Henry Hathaway, John Ford, George Marshall. Technicolor.)
- **LAWRENCE OF ARABIA** (*BLC/Columbia*) David Lean, Sam Spiegel and Robert Bolt's massive reconstruction of the desert campaigns. Impeccably academic direction and a genuine response to the setting, but the whole thing has rather the air of a blockbuster in search of a hero. (Peter O'Toole, Alec Guinness, Jack Hawkins, Anthony Quinn. Technicolor, Super Panavision 70.)
- MR. ROBERTS** (*Warner-Pathé*) Reissue of the 1955 comedy, begun by Ford and finished by Mervyn LeRoy, about life aboard a U.S. supply ship. Stylish playing from Henry Fonda and Jack Lemmon; jokes and sentiments faithfully reproduced from the stage original. (James Cagney, William Powell; Warner-color, CinemaScope.)
- *MISTRESS, THE** (*Gala*) Vilgot Sjöman's first film as director takes a cool look at a young girl's tortured relationship with two lovers, with acknowledgments to Bergman and the Nouvelle Vague. Several perceptive scenes; atmosphere overworks the elusive and elliptical. (Bibi Andersson, Max von Sydow, Per Myrberg.)
- ***NAZARIN** (*Contemporary*) Re-viewed, Buñuel's account of a young Mexican priest's attempt to live as a modern Christ retains its ferocious power. Only a clumsy opening, and Figueroa's occasionally bloated camerawork, prevent it from achieving the perfection of *Viridiana* and *The Exterminating Angel*. (Francisco Rabal, Marga Lopez, Rita Macedo.) Reviewed.
- **NUTTY PROFESSOR, THE** (*Paramount*) Jerry Lewis as a timid college professor transformed by a Jekyll and Hyde potion into a pop-singing teenage idol. Inventive and very funny, particularly in its early scenes, though it runs out of steam after the halfway mark. (Stella Stevens; director, Jerry Lewis. Technicolor.)
- PRESSURE POINT** (*United Artists*) Case history of an American fascist, as revealed through his relations with a Negro psychiatrist. A Stanley Kramer production, blazing with honourable intentions, but too stilted and melodramatic to make more than a few elementary points. (Sidney Poitier, Bobby Darin; director, Hubert Cornfield.)
- *RAVEN, THE** (*Warner-Pathé*) Roger Corman's most whole-hearted send-up of his own Poe cycle. Sadly, the witty script sags in the middle, but Price, Karloff and Lorre have the time of their lives as a trio of 15th century magicians pitting their powers against each other. (Hazel Court. Pathécolor, Panavision.) Reviewed.
- RUNNING MAN, THE** (*BLC/Columbia*) Thriller about an insurance fraud, which sends Laurence Harvey chasing around Spain in disguise as an Australian sheep farmer. Chief mystery is Carol Reed's failure to make a tolerable adventure more than rudimentarily exciting. (Lee Remick, Alan Bates. Technicolor, Panavision.)
- *STATION SIX SAHARA** (*BLC/British Lion*) Glowering melodrama about the uproar caused at a remote pipe-line station by the arrival of Carroll Baker. Seth Holt directs for tension, with plenty of sweating close-ups; Peter van Eyck supplies the Teutonic Sturm und Drang. (Ian Bannen, Denholm Elliott.)
- *STUDS LONIGAN** (*United Artists*) Ambitious adaptation of James Farrell's novel, strong on Twenties atmosphere and directed with feeling. Unhappily, production difficulties and a laborious central performance take the edge off it. (Christopher Knight, Venetia Stevenson, Frank Gorshin; director, Irving Lerner.)
- *TOM JONES** (*United Artists*) Hit-or-miss rendering of Fielding's novel as a jolly cavalcade of 18th century bosoms and bawdry. Energetically undisciplined but intermittently salvaged by its actors, led by a magnificent Edith Evans. (Albert Finney, Susannah York, Hugh Griffith, Joan Greenwood; director, Tony Richardson. Eastman Colour.)
- UGLY AMERICAN, THE** (*Rank*) Marlon Brando as U.S. ambassador to a South East Asian state, who finally learns the difference between neutralist (by now pro-American, and dead) and Communist. Politically naive fable, often disconcertingly off target. (Eiji Okada, Pat Hingle; director, George Englund. Technicolor Print.)
- VICE AND VIRTUE** (*Gala*) Vadim reaches the lower depths in a raving adaptation from the Marquis de Sade, festooned with Gestapo uniforms, vestal Virgins, Awful Fates, and Wagner on the sound track. (Annie Girardot, Robert Hossein, Catherine Deneuve. Franscope.)
- V.I.P.s, THE** (*M-G-M*) All-star entertainment, with Asquith in full command of his cast, and Terence Rattigan supplying the smooth and predictable screenplay. Plot is a series of anecdotes about airline passengers delayed by fog. (Elizabeth Taylor, Richard Burton, Orson Welles. Eastman Colour, Panavision.)
- *WAR HUNT** (*United Artists*) Downbeat story of a psychotic war lover in Korea. Uneven direction of the players, and a narrative which can't sustain its grip, though the war scenes are appropriately stark and frightening. (John Saxon, Robert Redford, Charles Aidman; director, Denis Sanders.)
- **WEST SIDE STORY** (*United Artists*) Strikingly mounted version of the Broadway musical which fails to bridge the gap between realistic backgrounds and Hollywood social rage, between dramatic dancing and tired echoes of Romeo and Juliet. Fine playing by George Chakiris, Richard Beymer and Rita Moreno. (Natalie Wood, Russ Tamblyn; directors, Robert Wise, Jerome Robbins. Technicolor, Panavision 70.)
- WIVES AND LOVERS** (*Paramount*) Cautionary tale about a best-selling novelist whose venture into expense account high-life goes to his head. Would-be sophisticated comedy, with any amount of martini-mixing and Broadway name-dropping; sterling performance by Shelley Winters as wisecracker-in-chief. (Janet Leigh, Van Johnson; director, John Rich.)
- WONDERFUL WORLD OF THE BROTHERS GRIMM, THE** (*M-G-M/Cinerama*) Heavily played by Laurence Harvey and Carl Boehm, the inventive brothers become lost in the Hollywood schmalz, lightened by flashes of wit in the fairy tales and by Martita Hunt's glowing witch-lady. (Claire Bloom, Yvette Mimieux; directors, Henry Levin, George Pal. Technicolor, Cinerama.)

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